

The Complete Poems
of
JOHN SKELTON
Laureate

EDITED BY
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To ERNEST RHYS
WHO HAS DONE SO MUCH
TO BRING LITERATURE WITHIN THE RANGE OF EVERYMAN,
THIS POPULAR EDITION OF JOHN SKELTON'S POEMS
IS DEDICATED IN AFFECTION AND ESTEEM



INTRODUCTION

I

OF Skelton's career we know comparatively little; of his personal appearance nothing is known. Although William Bullein represents him as sitting "in the corner of a pillar, with a frosty bitten face, frowning" and "writing many a sharp distichon,"¹ his reference cannot be taken as anything more than a hint at an imaginary portrait. The date of Skelton's birth has been fixed approximately at 1460. Tradition asserts that he was descended from the Skeltons of Cumberland, although Norfolk seems to have been his native county. Dyce thinks it probable that the poet was the "one Scheklton" who, according to Cole, became M.A. at Cambridge in 1484.² At any rate, we know that he was awarded the degree of laureate by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, honoured by University of Louvain, and, some years after 1494, was chosen as tutor to the young Prince Henry, who subsequently became Henry VIII. Needless to say, his reputation as a scholar, as well as his personal character, must have been highly esteemed at that time to be thought to merit such an appointment — although Miss Agnes Strickland, in her *Lives of the Queens of England*, considers that "the corruption imparted by this ribald and ill-living wretch [i.e. Skelton] laid the foundation of his royal pupil's grossest crimes!" But, as Dyce remarks, "when ladies attempt to write history, they sometimes say odd things."³ It was about this time, when Prince Henry was nine years old, that Erasmus visited England and paid his

¹ *A Dialogue both pleasant and pietifull*, 1564.

² *The Poetical Works of John Skelton*, edited by Rev. Alexander Dyce, 1843.

³ *Ibid.*

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famous tribute to Skelton as “the one light and glory of British letters”—a tribute provoked, not by Skelton’s English poems, for Erasmus’ knowledge of English was slight, but by his Latin verses and translations of the classics. Further evidence of his reputation as a classical scholar is afforded at this time by Caxton’s preface to *The Boke of Eneydos compylyed by Vyrgyle* (1490), which contains the invocation to

Maister John Skelton late created poet laureate in the University of Oxenford, to oversee and correct this said book, and to address and expound, whereas shall be found fault, to them that shall require it. For him I know sufficient to expound and English every difficulty that is therein. For he hath translated the *Epistles of Tully* and the *Book of Diodorus Sicullus*, and divers other works out of Latin into English, not in rude and old language, but in polished and ornate terms craftily, as he hath read Virgil, Ovid, Tully, and all the other noble poets and orators to me unknownen: And also he hath read the Nine Muses and understands their musical sciences. . . . I suppose he hath drunken of Elicon’s Well.

There is at least one example in the following pages of these “polished and ornate terms,” in the prose passages of the *Replication*, which reminds us of nothing so much as the manner of Robert Greene’s euphuistic novels, though with the mythological natural history left out. But it should be explained here that the title poet laureate did not originally signify the office of poet laureate as we know it to-day, but it was used to designate a degree in grammar, including rhetoric and versification, taken at the university, when the graduate was presented with a wreath of laurel. In 1493, however, Skelton was granted the distinction of wearing a white and green dress with the name Calliope embroidered upon it, and it may have been about this time, or even later, that he became honorary poet laureate, or king’s orator, but no record has ever been discovered of his having enjoyed an

annual salary from the Crown in consequence of such an office. So that, although we still continue to give Skelton his full title, we do so chiefly in complaisance to the poet's memory, seeing that during his lifetime he so much insisted upon it.

During his pupil's minority, Skelton must have resided at Court, and as a Court official he would have been in personal contact with Thomas Wolsey, when the latter was chaplain to Henry VII, and also well-known to the poet Stephen Hawes, then Groom of the Chamber. It may possibly have been some slight put upon him by Wolsey at that time which planted the seed of that lifelong rancour that, in later years, brought forth such bitter fruit. Although Churchyard tells us that he was "seldom out of prince's grace,"¹ knowing his opinion of Courts and courtiers, as exemplified in *The Bouge of Court and Magnificence*, we cannot suppose that he was altogether popular there. Add to this Churchyard's report that "his speech was as he wrate," and we begin to understand something of his contemporaries' antagonism. In 1498, Skelton took holy orders, "but," says Dyce, "how soon after that he became rector of Diss in Norfolk, and what portion of his life he spent there in the excercise of his duties, cannot be ascertained."² We know that he was living there in 1504 and 1511, as he witnessed several wills there in those years; also, from the internal evidence of his poems, he seems to have been there in 1506, 1507, and 1513; and in the year of his death he was still nominally rector of Diss, although at that time he had been absent from his rectory for at least six years.

It has been supposed that this exile of a well-known scholar and courtier to an obscure Norfolk village was the result of rivals' machinations against him. This may be so, only we cannot ascertain how far this appointment was an

¹Eulogy prefixed to Marsh's edition of Skelton's *Pithy, Pleasant, and Profitable Works*, 1568.

²Ibid.

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exile; in any case, the exile may have been quite voluntary. Skelton may have used his rectory as a place of refuge while the periodic epidemics of the plague raged in the capital; or he may have gone there to write undisturbed; he may even have gone there as a refuge from the Court itself. We know, at any rate, that he lived there with his wife, keeping her ostensibly as a mistress, marriage in a priest being a capital crime. But whether it was necessary for a priest to retire into the country before he could keep a mistress in those days, we can, of course, only conjecture — although it may have been safer for them to marry in the country than in London. Skelton tells us in *Colin Clout* that the priests

Could not keep their wives
From them for their lives!

and Wolsey, when his power became full-blown, was quite notorious in this respect. In fact, he “spareth neither maid nor wife,” Skelton tells us, suggesting sarcastically that no doubt he has a special bull from the Pope exempting him from chastity, as he had exempting him (on account of a weak digestion, which Skelton does not mention) from the more rigorous Lenten fasts. Nevertheless, Skelton was called to account and temporally suspended from his benefice for his own irregularities by his diocesan, the “impure and bloody-minded”¹ Bishop Nix, largely, it is said, at the instigation of the Dominican friars.

There is an amusing account of this episode in the apocryphal *Merrie Tales of Skelton*, some of which is worth quoting, as it must contain at least an element of truth and would seem to be fairly typical of the poet’s fearlessness of mind and peculiar type of wit. The next Sunday, after taking his congregation to task pretty severely for “complaining of me to the bishop that I do keep a fair wench in my house,” he

¹Dyce, *ibid.*

goes on to address his wife, whom he had apparently brought into church for this purpose:

"Thou wife," said Skelton, "that hast my child, be not afraid, bring me hither my child to me": the which was done. And he, showing his child naked to all the parish, said, "How say you neighbours all? – is not this child as fair as is the best of all yours? It hath nose, eyes, hands, and feet, as well as any of yours: it is not like a pig, nor a calf, nor like no fowl nor no monstrous beast. If I had," said Skelton, "brought forth this child without arms or legs, or that it were deformed, being a monstrous thing, I would never have blamed you to have complained to the bishop of me: but to complain without a cause, I say, as I said before in my anthem, *vos estis*, you be, and have been, and will and shall be knaves, to complain of me without a cause reasonable!"

One feels somehow that this story ought to be true, as it was such behaviour that won for Skelton the hearts of the people and made his name, like Rabelais', a legend for many a day to come. We have the evidence of Wood that, at Diss, Skelton was "esteemed more fit for the stage than the pew or pulpit"¹ – an estimate that surely must have come out of behaviour similar to that which formed the basis of the *Merrie Tales*.

But if he won the hearts of the people by what Warton calls his "ludicrous disposition,"² he lost the esteem of the more "respectable" men of his time. Bluff King Hal, we may suppose, would have been one of the first to appreciate such a jest, especially as we know the poems *Against Gernesche*, and even possibly *Elinor Rummung*, to have been composed for his amusement.

As Skelton grew older the antagonism of his rival men of letters – an antagonism that he seems to have done his best to arouse – by souring his temper, doubtless added venom to the tartness of his satire. Above all, his hatred of Wolsey

¹Ath. Oxon., ed. Bliss.

²History of English Poetry (1774–81).

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increased to such an extent that he was the only man in England who dared to attack the great cardinal at the height of his power. The attack is at first veiled, as in *Magnificence*; in *Speak, Parrot*, Wolsey's rule is indicated as one of the most flagrant abuses of the age; in *Colin Clout* the tone is more general; but in *Why Come Ye Not to Court?* the full battery of his wrath is directed solely against the cardinal.

The anger aroused by such a piece as *Colin Clout* must have owed a great deal to the metre in which it was written. It was a metre that no "worthy clerk" would have used; and to set high Church matters, questions of the weightiest gravity, jiggling to this syncopated jazz-time was doubtless considered scandalous. Charges similar to those contained in *Colin Clout* were, of course, common enough: one might have found them, though much less pungently expressed, in Barclay's work, and Colet himself preached at Convocation against many such abuses. But then Barclay wrote either in courtly rhyme-royal stanzas or dignified couplets, and as for Colet, the clergy were obliged to swallow strong words from the dean of St. Paul's. Moreover, they knew that neither the nobles nor the people would read Barclay, but Skelton's ragged rhymes did not need to be read to take their effect — the ballad-singers set them ringing all over the country.

They were flung abroad at random like floating seeds upon a gusty day [a contemporary writes], and settled and struck where they listed. Many of them were never committed to print, but learned by heart by hundreds, repeated in the roadside alehouse or at the market-cross on fair-days, when dealer and customer left booth and stall vacant to push into the crowd hedging round the itinerant ballad-singer.¹

Disseminated thus, we can form some idea of their probable effect upon a crowd already incensed against the Church

¹Quoted in article by James Hooper in *Gentleman's Magazine*, September, 1897. The passage is apparently anonymous.

and prepared to believe anything to its discredit. We can see, too, how dangerous such rhymes were even for Wolsey, watched as he was with increasing dislike and suspicion throughout the country. The surprising thing is that he tolerated Skelton so long; and, knowing his elaborate system of espionage, we can only wonder at this literary David slinging his stones at the political giant, the man who was, after all, for a good many years the virtual ruler of England. Wolsey's contempt for criticism is well known; he may have considered Skelton beneath his notice. Or it may be that Skelton relied upon the king's protection — for no patron, however noble, could afford to oppose the cardinal openly. The example of the Duke of Buckingham was evidence of the fate awaiting those who became too bold. But Skelton was forced to take sanctuary at Westminster in 1523, after the composition and circulation of *Why Come Ye Not to Court?* Three years later we find the *Replication* dedicated to Wolsey in the most fulsome terms of flattery. But this may not prove anything, as these dedications were sometimes written and appended to books by their printers. At any rate, *The Garland of Laurel*, printed in 1523, has its respectful envoy to "The Great Cardinal, the most honourable legate *a latere*," and the vague and misleading mention of *Colin Clout* and "the popinjay" (i.e. *Speak, Parrot*) among his works suggests that he was still hoping to put Wolsey off the scent. If the English verses after the Latin envoy really belong to this poem, he confesses to living "Tween hope and dread," and in the Latin envoy itself he requests Wolsey "to be mindful to petition for the prebend which he promised to entrust to me some day." It is all very mysterious. It is almost as though he thought Wolsey unaware of his attacks.

The attacks themselves, of course, are in many ways unfair, for, although the actual charges are mostly justified, they only give one side of the truth. Skelton says nothing of Wolsey's great powers as a statesman — if, indeed, he was

capable of judging them; he grossly underrates his learning; and the frequent mentions of his "base origin" are snobbish, although they make an excellent foil to the cardinal's subsequent overbearing behaviour in the Star Chamber and elsewhere, with which Skelton does not fail to charge him. Undoubtedly there was a good deal of the *parvenu* in Wolsey—but, if a man can raise himself by his own abilities, the more credit to him! As for his humbling of the great nobles whose fathers and grandfathers had, for their personal feuds, for a century preceding turned England into a field of blood, the king, inwardly at any rate, must have been grateful. But, with all his services to his country, Wolsey was an unpopular Minister. It was at his door that Henry's taxes were laid; his foreign policy was watched throughout the land with suspicion, the story going about at one time that he was actually in the pay of France; and, generally, he was regarded as an impudent and overweening busybody, taking on more than he could accomplish, bungling everything, and wasting the country's money on futile schemes abroad and maintaining himself at home in wanton luxury. Fantastic as some of these notions seem to us to-day, that they were prevalent in his time we have Skelton's poems as evidence, and although Skelton's own personal grievances against his enemy helped to paint the picture blacker than it seemed to others, there can be little doubt that these poems reflect much of the attitude of the country at large.

We have still to consider Skelton's attitude to those problems of his day that he was more fitted to judge. He has been called one of the most sincere reformers of his time, and it has been claimed for him that he was superior to the prejudices of his age.¹

Reformer he certainly was, but not, of course, in the sense of the word as it was understood at the Reformation. He was not, that is, a reformer like his great contemporary Hugh

¹R. Hughes, *Poems of John Skelton*.

Latimer, or even like Bilney, whom he attacks in the *Replication* – both of whom were subsequently burnt for their zeal. Skelton's reforming zeal, fortunately for him, kept well on this side of heresy. It is to be noticed, too, that his work contains no actual suggestions for reform, and it would have been interesting to see what side he would have taken, had he lived, in the Reformation. He might, indeed, have been severely shocked at the attitude taken up by his old pupil. But, in his poems, Skelton contents himself with attacking existing abuses. It would seem that he was too full of wrath and bitterness to do much else, although his peculiar turn of mind sometimes gave even his anger a comical look. There is no suspicion, at any rate, that he considered the system itself at fault: he would reform abuses within the system without altering the system itself. In these matters he was quite orthodox – the *Replication* makes that clear enough – while his savage exultance over the Scottish defeat at Flodden is sufficient to show that, for all his culture, he still had a good deal of the unredeemed barbarian in him. In fact, the truth is that, like other figures of the Middle Ages, he was a combination of savage cruelty, in questions of religious and national prejudice, and of exquisite tenderness, when his personal emotions were touched. As poet and priest he was both original and conservative, and, like the age he lived in, a conflicting mixture of antiquated medievalism and the new spirit of humanism – yet, in spite of himself, by his writings he helped to precipitate the greatest reform that the Church in England had yet known. In scholastic matters, again, he was apparently conservative, and, notwithstanding that he himself, by his translation of Latin classics and his new English grammar, had contributed to the advancement of learning and the regeneration of the language, he regarded the increasing study of Greek at the universities with dislike and suspicion. His views on this subject are unmistakably set forth in *Speak, Parrot*. Everywhere he finds confusion: in

the Church, in the State, and in the schools. But, actually although he did not recognise it, this was an age of transition: the old order was rapidly changing, ideas and systems were in a state of flux, and Skelton himself, with his unrest, his satire, his critical sense, was a typical figure of the age. And it is this quality, perhaps, that make him in some ways peculiarly sympathetic to us who are to-day also on the verge of a new era.

It has been thought strange that none of the names of the Humanists appear in Skelton's surviving work: there is no mention of either More, or Colet, or Linacre, or Grocyn. All we know is that he quarrelled with Lily, the grammarian, whose attitude to him may have set the example for the rest of the Oxford group. Lily's reply to the usual vituperative verses written about him by Skelton, as translated by Fuller in his *Worthies*, in substance was:

With face so bold and teeth so sharp
Of viper's venom, why dost thou carp? . . .
Skelton, thou art, let all men know it,
Neither learned nor a poet.

And, according to the new standards of learning and poetry, this was partially true. The great bond that united all these men was their love of Greek, and it was precisely the study of Greek to which Skelton most objected, as being detrimental to the old scholastic curriculum. (Incidentally, it has been pointed out that the "Skeltonic" itself may be considered as an adaptation in English of a verse-form quite commonly used by the medieval Latinists.¹) But, while Skelton showed himself capable of writing Latin verse in imitation of classical models, verse which even Warton called "elegant" (see, for example, the elegiacs on Henry VII in the Appendix), his bias was undoubtedly towards the old accentual

¹J. M. Berdan, *Early Tudor Poetry*.

Latin of the Middle Ages – a mode of writing that a man like Lily considered barbarous. This kind of thing, indeed, would scarcely have recommended itself to the Humanists:

*Dic, inimice crucis Christi,
Ubi didicisti
Facere hoc,
Domine Dawcock?*

— (*Ware the Hawk.*)

But then, English humanism had little influence upon Skelton, except that he reacted against it – in any case it did little more than pave the way for future developments in poetry – and he was born too late and was too conservative in temper to be much affected by it. Nevertheless, his work, although full of such “monkish” Latin tags as that quoted above, shows a wide acquaintance with classical authors, and he frequently compares himself as a satirist to Juvenal and Martial. In *The Garland of Laurel* he goes even further and tells the reader to regard him as the “British Catullus” –

Say: Skelton was your Adonis;
Say: Skelton was your Homer!

Doubtless, anticipating the effect of such claims on his Oxford rivals, he added that he is “not sorry to bear with dogs’ madness, for even great Virgil bore the brunt of similar threats, and even Ovid’s Muse was not exempt.” But such writing was not calculated to make him popular among other men of learning. And, although to-day we can afford to smile at his claims, since they appear too fantastic to be taken seriously – if, indeed, they were ever seriously intended – it must be remembered that in his own day, except for Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate (who are represented in *The Garland of Laurel* as honouring him, although he modestly assures them that “ye have me far passing my merits extolléd”), he had no other

outstanding English models with which to compare himself. If all the poetry of the last four hundred years was unknown to us, Skelton would appear as a far more imposing figure than he does at present. Obvious as such a statement may be, that was the situation in literature when he wrote.

Skelton's chief antagonist, as far as we know, was Alexander Barclay. Unfortunately his *Contra Skeltonum* has disappeared, as it might have thrown some light on our poet's life. We have, at any rate, the *Fourth Eclogue*, which contains a significant passage:

And to what vices that princes most intend,
Those dare these fools solemnise and commend.
Then is he decked as Poet Laureate,
When stinking Thais made him her graduate.

— which would seem to support the theory that, in Skelton's case, the laureateship was a royal rather than an academic honour. And at the end of *The Ship of Fools* there is the contemptuous reference to *Philip Sparrow* — which, incidentally, proves this poem to have been written before 1508 —

It longeth not to my art and cunning
For Philip Sparrow the *Dirige* to sing.

But apparently there were others also who took exception to this elegy on the dead sparrow — others that, as Skelton tells us in *The Garland of Laurel*, “grudge therat with frowning countenance.” To whom he lightly makes reply:

But what of that? hard it is to please all men:
Who list to amend, let him set to his pen!

But there is still another, as well as these mysterious critics, mentioned in the same poem, that “frowned on me full angrily and pale” — Robert Gaguin, the French historian.

And, although we now have the long-lost *Recule Against Gaguin* – if, indeed, we have it all – we are not very much the wiser. But no doubt these cryptic reproaches refer to some courtesy of Gaguin's well known at the time, or to some personal grievance between the two men. There are the Garnesche poems as eloquent evidence of what Skelton could do in the way of personal abuse, once he was thoroughly roused, although in this case the “*flyting*” would seem to be fundamentally good-humoured, having none of the concentrated venom of the Wolsey satires. It is not unlikely, though, that the quarrel originated in offended vanity on both sides, and that the king fanned the flames of their tempers into a battle of wit for his own amusement. At any rate, the metaphors Skelton hurls at his adversary must even then have seemed too preposterous to be taken seriously, although the reflections on the knight's amorous prowess may have struck home.

Yet there are times when one begins to suspect that Skelton's satire was not always quite what it seemed, for, even in the most serious passages, he will suddenly drop off the mask of moralist and begin clowning. And, even when he was most blowing his own trumpet, it may be that he was half laughing at himself and others the while. So that we cannot, any more than his contemporaries, always be too sure of his naivety. In one case at least – that is, in *Colin Clout* – we can see how much it suited him to play the simple-minded innocent.

At all events, the hostility of rivals was compensated for by illustrious patronage. Early in life, Skelton was commissioned by Henry Percy, fifth Earl of Northumberland – a lover of literature at a time when most other nobles could neither read nor write – to dedicate an elegy to the memory of the fourth earl, who was murdered in a popular rising in Yorkshire on April 28th, 1489. “At the contemplation of my Lady's Grace” – i.e. at the command of the Countess of

Richmond and Derby, Henry VII's mother, on whose death he also wrote a Latin elegy — Skelton translated de Guilleville's *Peregrinage de la Vie Humaine*. The Countess of Surrey, too, must have been an admirer of his genius, for it is at her instigation that a garland of laurel is woven for him in the poem recording the event, while he was staying, possibly as a member of her train, at Sheriff-Hutton Castle in Yorkshire. It has been thought that, at one time, Skelton was tutor to young Henry Howard, although that poet's work as it has come down to us shows little enough of his influence.

The last six years of Skelton's life were passed in sanctuary at Westminster, and he died there on June 21st, 1529. It is said that on his death-bed he confessed to having secretly married the woman by whom he left several children. But the only relic left us of those dim days is an entry in the churchwardens' accounts of St. Margaret's which reads:

1529. Item. Of Mr. Skelton for viii. tapers ol. 2s. 8d.

He was buried without ceremony in the chancel of a neighbouring church, and this inscription placed over his grave:

Ioannes Skeltonus, vates Pierius, hic situs est.

II

It was John Skelton's misfortune to live through what is generally admitted to be the dullest age of our literature. Born into the last half of the fifteenth century, he inherited an already sterile medieval tradition, and at the time of his death the dry bones of English poetry had still to be revived by the new breath of the Renaissance.

Yet there are occasional lyrics and ballads of this time, such as the great *Carol*, *The Nut Brown Maid*, and *Quia*

Amore Langueo, that survive as some of the most uncontestedly perfect things in the English language. And all through the fifteenth century, the spirit of poetry lived on in quiet monastery cells, isolated, while the rest of the land was given over to the din and vaunting chivalry of civil war. But whenever it came in contact with the Court, poetry was immediately debased. Thus it is to his brief Court-life that Lydgate owed much of his empty sententiousness, and in his interminable verses we see the vanity of the world intermixed and diluted with a natural propensity to dry moralising – both of these qualities being absent from the lovely anonymous poems in which the mild sweetness of certain truly religious minds of that unhappy time lives on. But Skelton had his share of both the worst qualities of the Court poets and the best of the anonymous writers. Indeed, had it not been for his fiery originality, that in defiance of tradition adopted a mean form and forged it into a living and personal language, his scholastic training and literary inheritance would have been sufficient to bury the poet in him beyond all hope of resurrection. But, as it is, he stands out as a unique figure in the history of English poetry, a sudden and strange illumination between the dreary Lydgatian wastes, when the manner of Chaucer was unimaginatively imitated without the least spark of his vital genius, and the fresh spring of Wyatt and Surrey.

To the chief writers of Skelton's day, however, Lydgate was still the supreme model, and, emulating his "polished eloquence," men like Hawes and Barclay prepared for themselves a respectable oblivion. It is, one might almost say, largely Skelton's energetic "bad taste" that has kept his name alive where others have been forgotten. But the price he has paid for this survival is the notoriousness of a few poems which, while they perpetuated his name, also served to befoul his reputation. Indeed, the drab decency of his contemporary rivals could scarcely have wished for a better revenge!

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Since his own age, the body of Skelton's work has been ignored, and he has been read hastily and in scraps for the sake of a few scabrous passages for which, after enjoying their little snigger, his readers have condemned him. That such was the attitude of, at any rate, the scholastic readers in the eighteenth century we learn from Pope's couplet:

Chaucer's worst ribaldry is learned by rote,
And beastly Skelton Heads of Houses quote.

But as in the Age of Good Sense Chaucer was little more admired than Skelton, Warton's failure to understand him was perhaps a foregone conclusion. For, when Warton wrote his *History of English Poetry*, literary ideals had not after all, changed very greatly since Pope wrote *The Dunciad* fifty years earlier: and, although he did good work in recalling attention to the earlier poets, Warton showed his lack of imagination by preferring the conventional imitators of Lydgate to Skelton. But that was only to be expected in an age when everything that did not conform to "classical" smoothness and regularity was considered barbaric. The fresh morning voice that hails us from his work, as of a busy workman delighting in his craft, the mild purity of his lyrics, the delicate fancy, the irony by turns whimsical and bitter, the deep religious feeling of the poems in which he carried on the tradition of the morality and miracle plays, and, above all, his outstanding vigour and originality — all this was lost to Thomas Warton and critics like him, so that all they have to give us is a few stuffy sentiments of scholarly prudishness. "It is in vain," writes Warton — "it is in vain to apologise for the coarseness, obscenity, and scurrility of Skelton by saying that his poetry is tinctured with the manners of his age. Skelton would have been a writer without decorum in any period." Yes, it is quite in vain, and for us, not only in vain, but hypocritical. And let it be admitted, also, that it is to such

“writers without decorum” that we owe some of our greatest debts of gratitude: for it is they who, by transgressing the narrow laws both of ‘decency’ and form, bring new vitality into literature and liberate the spirit of poetry from the library and the lecture-room. But taste has changed vastly since Warton wrote; it has changed vastly since Victorian and Edwardian critics wrote; it has changed so greatly, in fact, that our own age may bring down upon itself the virtuous censure of future Wartons. But, however that may be, what is of interest here is that to-day we are able to enjoy Skelton, just as we are able to enjoy Rabelais, without troubling about the principles of decorum that perverted our ancestors’ judgment. We can see, for example, how sadly lacking in a sense of humour these critics must have been if they could not appreciate the topsy-turvy brilliance of a poem like *Elinor, Rumming*.

But with the Romantic Revival at the beginning of the next century the tide began to turn. Coleridge gave his opinion that “old Skelton’s *Philip Sparrow*” was “an exquisite and original poem.” Wordsworth seconded him with the more reserved statement that Skelton was “a writer deserving of far greater attention than his works had hitherto received.” Southey, more enthusiastically, wrote in the *Quarterly Review* for September 1814 that Skelton was “one of the most extraordinary writers of any age or country.” In 1843 appeared Dyce’s scholarly edition of the poetical works – an edition upon which all future editions of the poet would inevitably have to be based. But there were no future editions – no complete editions, that is, although small selections appeared in 1902 and recently in 1924 – and Dyce himself offered his volumes with evident trepidation to “the very limited class of readers for which they are intended.” Since Dyce, critics have at least paid Skelton lip service, although they have not encouraged anyone to read him. One reason for this neglect is that Dyce’s edition has been so long out of

print that it is only known to scholars. Also, on account of the old spelling of his poems, which until now has never been removed, and the unduly stressed obscurity of these, Skelton is generally regarded as an old and difficult poet. It is true that there still remain obscure passages in his work, although the greater part of it, to an intelligent reader, is as clear as daylight. But it is well to remember that the obscurity of certain parts of *Speak, Parrot*, for instance, was intentional, as at the time Skelton feared to make his meaning too plain; although to informed contemporaries, no doubt, it was much easier than it is for us, when many references are lost. But even this poem, hitherto regarded as practically unintelligible, seems now to have yielded up a great part of its secret to the ingenious investigations of Professor Berdan of Yale University. By finding a probable clue to the dating of the piece (see page 289 *note*), Professor Berdan has made it possible to interpret the cryptic utterances of the bird in the light of the history of the years they are now seen in all probability to cover. All the same, his interpretation cannot be accepted as in any way final, although with the meagre evidence in our possession it is certainly very feasible, and brings partial meaning into a piece that is usually considered fantastic jibberish.

If the eighteenth century was hampered, by its classic notions of decorum, from appreciating Skelton, and the nineteenth embarrassed by moral considerations, and the age that grew into being with the advance of the sixteenth century, its head slightly turned by the new discoveries, literary and geographical, found itself despising anything that savoured of the medieval, our own age, with its poetic experiment, has witnessed a revival of interest in this man who is now seen to be one of the most versatile metrists in the language. Certainly no more effective polemical measure — unless we except the heroic couplet — has been used than the lash of *Colin Clout*. Nor, in its own way, has the richly

humorous syncopation of *Elinor Rumming* ever been surpassed. And *Philip Sparrow* is evidence of what delicate music could, upon occasion, be evoked from the same measure apparently so rough and intractable. In these poems, Skelton stands out as completely original. Here there is no one like him in all our literature. If *Elinor Rumming*, in its harsh angularity, is like a cubist painting, as Mr. Richard Hughes suggests, *Philip Sparrow* is like a piece of music for the harpsichord, with its bird-like whimsicality and light elegaic modulations. The delightfully ironical quotation of the Mass for the Dead is itself a stroke of genius. As for Skelton's mastery of the conventional forms of the day, no one since Chaucer has used the rhyme-royal with such variety and animation as he in the *Bouge of Court*. It is a far cry from this poem, with its vivid and humorous characterisation, to the lifeless and everlasting allegories of his contemporaries and immediate forebears. But in *Speak, Parrot* he makes the form his own: the poet himself speaks with the bird, and we feel the pathos of a sensitive and keenly intelligent thing forced to assume the rôle of clown and charlatan — but yet, being a professed fool, granted liberty to speak his mind. "For truth in parable ye wantonly pronounce." But, he tells us, an it be well sought, under that doth rest matter more precious than jewels. Some of the precious matter certainly needs finding, although anyone can enjoy the fresh and ingenious skill of the opening stanzas. Here is the parrot looking at us with his "beak bent and little wanton eye," reeling to and fro on his perch and punctuating his biting remarks with ironical jibberish and bursts of idiot laughter. In this poem there is a peculiar atmosphere that one only finds in Skelton. The poem is, he tells us, a mirror that seems transparent, or like a looking-glass in a riddle. Not a very illuminating remark, perhaps, but conveying just that combination of queer clarity, deeper meaning behind appearances, and reflected inference that we feel dimly as we

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read. It is all quaint and witty and very characteristic. *The Garland of Laurel*, otherwise a rather stilted and uninspired poem, except that it is of interest to us as Skelton's self-staged apotheosis, contains some really exquisite love-sonnets in the comparatively well-known lines to Margery Wentworth and Margaret Hussey. The conventional minor pieces to various ladies, such as the poem beginning "The ancient acquaintance, madam, between us twain," and the Northumberland elegy, with their stilted imagery and empty sententiousness, have all the worst faults of the complimentary verses of that date. Unfortunately, the other elegy, and by far the best of the two, that *On the Death of Edward IV*, is now thought by some critics (see Brie and Koebling) not to be his at all. But, in default of any positive evidence to the contrary, it has been included in this edition. Other minor poems that deserve individual mention are: *Upon a Dead Man's Head* — where the movement of the verse has a certain dry finality perfectly suited to the theme — the deeply felt *Woefully Arrayed*, the three *Prayers to the Trinity* — the use of rhyming polysyllables here giving the effect of grandeur — the poems *Against Gernesche* — with their knock-about vituperative humour — the vigorous and indignant *Ware the Hawk*, and, of course, the madrigal *Mannerly Margery* and the perfectly delightful *Lullay, Lullay, Like a Child*, which are both sufficient to show Skelton's power as a writer of really good popular songs that belong to more cheerful and full-blooded days than our own.

As for *Magnificence*, his one surviving play, it is not, perhaps, generally recognised that Skelton was the first professional man of letters to adopt the drama as a literary form. There had, of course, been numerous morality and miracle plays before his time, but these were anonymous and confined to ecclesiastical subjects, their purpose being either merely to illustrate Bible-stories or to show that the wages of sin is death. Skelton, however, introduces a secular

subject with his "interlude," and, although his purpose is distinctly moral, his means are satirical and, as Dr. Ramsay points out in his edition of the play,¹ he is chiefly concerned with showing that the wages of imprudent spending, through certain unnamed evil advisers, will be, for a certain unnamed rich prince, adversity and poverty. The case at issue is not so much universal as particular — although, of course, it can be interpreted universally — and the play contains much indirect satire of Wolsey's influence on the young Henry VIII. Moreover, compared with the earlier moralities, Skelton's interlude is quite elaborate in the design of its metrical details. The principal verse employed, however, is the rugged and heavy native long line of four stresses with a caesura after the second stress, dividing the line, like Anglo-Saxon verse, into two rhythmic halves of practically equivalent weight. But the metre is, like the *leit-motif* in music, to a large extent varied, for each character and each scene has its appropriate verse-measure. Thus the courtly rhyme-royal stanza is employed for the graver and more dignified passages and the lighter, swifter couplet for scenes in which the influence of Fancy and Folly predominate. Again, in the scenes of rapid dialogue between the "Vices," the irregular couplet is used, the metre being intentionally loose and lightly marked to suggest that, while these characters are plotting a common villainy, their individual characters are indistinguishable, one vice covering them all. In this way the metrical variations are quite subtly characteristic, and as the Vices are left alone "in the place" their monologues vary in metre, from Courtly Abusion's account of his more aristocratic sins, appropriately cast in the half-line rhyme-royal, and frantic Fancy's syncopated measures — strangely preluding our modern jazz — to Crafty Conveyance's heavily accented rhyme-royal stanzas, as being characteristic of one of the "heavy" villains of the piece. We find, too, that, as the

¹Early English Text Society, 1908.

drama approaches its climax with Magnificence's overthrow the metre of the scenes as a whole becomes more rapid and ragged, until it culminates at the final entrance of Folly, who sets the hero's brain spinning on the very brink of disaster. Then, with the entrance of grim Adversity, there is a sudden change to the heavily accented four-beat line. These final scenes are by far the most moving in the play. It is as though Skelton himself was as well acquainted with his own more dreadful characters as with the lighter courtiers upon whom he pours out the full venom of his scorn.

If *Magnificence* reflects much of the philosophy of Sebastian Brant's *Narrenschiff*, as Dr. Ramsay seeks to prove, *The Bouge of Court* is still more influenced by that work as Skelton was familiar with it in Barclay's version, *The Ship of Fools*, published in 1509. Yet, in form at any rate, *The Bouge of Court* — the most logically constructed of his poems — is a typical fifteenth-century allegory. It has the same astrological introduction, the insistence upon the necessity of "covert terms," and the usual assumption of modesty: the poet then falls asleep and his dream becomes the substance of the poem: he wakes up at a critical moment in the action and writes his "little book," for which he makes a conventional apology. Such is the form of Hawes' *Example of Virtue and Pastime of Pleasure*.

The difference is that Skelton fills the conventional framework with life and humour, though his allegorical figures are a satire on Court life in general. But then directness, vitality, and honesty of sentiment are Skelton's most obvious qualities, and it is these that have kept much of his work as fresh and alive to-day as when it was first written.

No metre could be more lively and forcible than the so-called "Skelgonic." Here are no literary graces, to be sure, but the stuff of life, the bare facts driven home with the curttness born of stringent necessity. But, once started, his bubbling volubility went to his head, and he found it very

difficult to stop. Over and over again he repeats the same things, devoid of all logical form and construction — although these pieces may be said to have a certain concentric movement of their own — round and round the same point he goes, always coming back to where he started from. But doubtless this apparently endless flow of words, this invincible facility in rhyme was one reason for his popularity with the unlettered public of his day, for it is thus, bursting out into spontaneous rhyme, that we find him, along with Will Summers, in the chapbook *Long Meg of Westminster*. Nevertheless his was no relaxed verbosity. Although he sometimes follows the vagaries of his rhymes, his grip of his subject never slackens: he beat sparks from his verse that lit upon the tonsures of the clergy and stung them. He managed his measure with a skill that no one else has ever been able to pick up again, for in other hands it degenerates into hopeless monotony.¹ And, although with him it goes at breathless speed, he is always ready with some ingenious rhythmic variation. It can scuttle and tumble headlong with the alewives of Leatherhead, "a sort of foul drabs" who,

With titters and tatters,
Bring dishes and platters,
With all their might running
To Elinor Rummung
To have of her tunning.

It can be plaintively elegaic:

When I remember again
How my Philip was slain,
Never half the pain
Was between you twain,
Pyramus and Thisbe,
As then befell to me:

¹One might mention here, however, Robert Graves' earlier poems (*Poems*, 1914-1926), where Skelton's manner has been very successfully caught in snatches.

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I wept and I wailed,
My tears down hailed,
But nothing it availed
To call Philip again,
Whom Gib, our cat, hath slain.

It can imitate the bird's movements:

When I remember it,
How prettily it would sit
Many times and oft
Upon my finger aloft . . .
For it would come and go,
And fly so to and fro;
And on me it would leap
When I was asleep
And his feathers shake.

It can be curt and epigrammatic:

Lo, for to do shamefully
He judgeth it no folly!
But to write of his shame
He saith we are to blame.
What a frenzy is this –
No shame to do amiss,
And yet he is ashamed
To be shamefully named!

The astonishing facility of the rhyming in each case adds force and point to the passage. Such verse has a lean, athletic quality, relying for its effect, not upon imagery or the softer poetic graces, but upon a diction clear and direct, and the hitting power of its recurring rhymes and terse, staccato rhythm.

No satisfactory estimate of Skelton as a poet has yet been made. To-day, in some quarters, there is a tendency to make up for his neglect by going to the other extreme with extravagant praise. There is excuse for both attitudes, as

Skelton is a particularly difficult writer to estimate. For one thing, he has been more read about than actually read, and he has fallen into the hands of scholars and critics who know before they read him that he does not write poetry as it should be written, and whose chief criterion is to admire what has been already admired before, or into the hands of eccentrics who admire a thing simply because it has never been admired before. Also his reputation has scarcely recovered from the blight cast upon it by Pope and Warton. Otherwise, critics have been puzzled by a man who is a mixture of piety and ribaldry, of sensibility and savagery; they have been put out by the swift whimsicality of his mind, embarrassed in the presence of one who is, by turns, fiercely in earnest and laughing at his own earnestness. Neither can they see with him the comical side of ugliness and filth — their own minds not being sufficiently above such things to take them lightly. Thus for many he has remained "beastly Skelton." And, all the while vexing their minds how to "place" him, they overlook those snatches of purest poetry with which he can at times enchant our minds —

Ennewéd your colour
Is like the daisy flower
After the April shower;
Star of the morrow gray.

Although no one would pretend that Skelton was a great poet, one hesitates to apply to him the epithet "minor." One feels all the while that he worked at a disadvantage. He is frequently complaining of the rusty state of the language. He complains that

Our natural tongue is rude,
And hard to be ennewed
With polished terms lusty:
Our language is so rusty,
So cankered, and so full

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Of frowards, and so dull,
That if I would apply
To write ornately,
I wot not where to find
Terms to serve my mind.

Indeed, his difficulty could not be more plainly and simply expressed. However, he was wise enough not to attempt to "write ornately," and confined himself to a plain vigorous style, often employing the most rudimentary metre he could think of, only too aware of the pitfalls of sententious prosiness or unconvincing grandiloquence that awaited the imitator of Lydgate. But, had Skelton lived in almost any other age than his own, it is fairly certain that, with a perfected instrument at his command, a regenerated language with a great tradition behind it, he would now occupy a high and respected place in poetry, and his wit, applied to more modern problems, would most likely have won him the position of a Swift, or perhaps even of a Shaw. As it is, he must be given the credit for introducing into poetry what, in his hands, amounted to a new idiom, although it is only he who has ever been able to make it seem a natural and inevitable expression of thought and emotion, or to use it with just that delight in words and rhythmic adroitness that transmutes even what might at first sight appear a doggerel measure into poetry. And he is, without exaggeration, the most considerable figure in poetry between Chaucer and Spenser, a lonely star shooting his fiery and erratic spears into the twilight-dawn before the risen sun of the Elizabethans. His poetry has the fascination of all fresh and spontaneous things. And, although he may weary us at times with the naïve delight in his own ecstatic volatility, it is not long before he surprises our attention with some quaint and witty phrase, some bright epigram, and we read on, willingly caught in the clear unending chain of words.

June 1931

PHILIP HENDERSON

GENERAL NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE present text has been founded on Dyce's edition of 1843, although in some places I have preferred manuscript readings – as given in Dyce's footnotes – and have made certain slight emendations of my own as the sense seemed to require. But the main difficulty facing any editor of Skelton is the absence of the original manuscripts and the corrupt state of the early editions on which, apart from Dyce, we are forced to depend. And even Dyce, although he cleared away endless misprints and copyists' errors, returning to the task through half a lifetime, left many obscure passages in his edition which have, at any rate, now been restored to intelligibility. In preparing my text I have also made use of Robert Lee Ramsay's edition of *Magnificence* (published by the Oxford University Press, for the Early English Text Society, in 1908), adopting his method of dividing the play into stages and scenes and his punctuation of the opening lines. I have, therefore, to thank the Oxford University Press for giving me their permission to do this. I have also collated certain passages of my text with Mr. Richard Hughes' edition of Skelton's *Poems* (Heinemann, 1924), and acknowledgements will be found in their proper place. Otherwise the punctuation and modernisation of the text is my own.

As to the system of modernisation adopted, my aim has been to produce a fluency and lucidity rather than a pedantically correct indication of every transposed stress and accented final *e* that may or may not have been pronounced in Skelton's time. We know that in this respect Skelton worked under difficulties. Even as he wrote, the final accented *e* of Chaucer was rapidly falling into disuse, while pronunciation

itself was undergoing a radical change. In cases, however, where the final *e* seems to have been lightly pronounced for the requirements of the metre it will be found dotted. But there is no doubt that Skelton used his metres freely, and, as with his contemporary, Hawes, we sometimes have what should properly be a regular five-stress line reading more easily as a four-stress — unless, of course, we pad it out with dotted *e*'s. But, in any case, Skelton's lines should not be read as iambics, even when they approximate to such smoothness, which is not often, for by attempting to read them in that way we shall turn what, in its own time, was fairly regular and artistic verse into wretched, halting stuff. The Skeltonic itself — in such poems as *Philip Sparrow* and *Colin Clout* — varies between a two- and a three-stress line, being in reality the old native long line of four stresses broken in half and rhymed.

The poems are arranged here more or less in chronological order, except that *The Garland of Laurel*, being a fitting *coda* to Skelton's poetic achievement, has been placed at the end of the book, and the shorter pieces have been grouped together under three convenient headings, there being even less evidence of the date of their composition than in the case of the longer pieces. This being intended more as a popular edition of Skelton than a dish to set before scholars, variorum readings have been omitted, as also Skelton's Latin marginal notes to *Speak, Parrot*, *A Replication*, and *The Garland*. The Latin poems themselves will be found in the Appendix, while the Latin portions of the English text have been rendered in footnotes as well as their often mutilated condition would allow. For valuable help in worrying out the more difficult passages I have to thank my uncle, Mr. C. G. Henderson. The odd chapters from Henry Watson's translation of Droyne's French version of Locker's Latin version of Brandt's *Narrenschiff*, hitherto included among Skelton's works by mistake (largely due to a reference in *The Garland* to a lost

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piece called *The Nation of Fools*, but which, as Brie suggests, might refer to the lines *Upon a Comely Coistrown*), have now been removed. But two small pieces discovered by Brie among the manuscripts at Cambridge, and first printed by him in his *Skelton-Studien*, have been added.

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(*No dates on editions unless stated. The bracketed figures are only conjectural.*)

Here begynneth a lytell treatyse named the bowge of courte.
Enprynted at Westminster by me Wynkyn the Worde.

Also another edition by the same printer.

Here folowyth divers Balettys and dyties solacyous devisyd by
Master Skelton, Laureat. (Without printer's name, but evi-
dently from the press of Pynson.)

Skelton Laureate agaynste a comely Coystrowne that curyowsly
chawntyd And curryshly cowntred, And madly in hys Musykks
mokkyshly made, Against the ix. Musys of polytyke Poems and
Poettys matryculat. (Pynson.) Contains also: *Upon a Dead
Man's Head and Womanhood, Wanton, Ye Want.*

A replyacion agaynst certayne yong scolers, abiured of late,
etc. . . . Impryned by Richard Pynson, printer to the kynges
most noble grace.

A ryght delectable tratyse upon a goodly Garland or Chapelet of
Lawrell, etc. . . . Inprynted by me Rycharde faukes dwelling in
dura rent or els in Powlis chyrche yarde at the sygne of the
A.B.C. The yere of our lorde, god M.CCCCC.XXLII.

Magnyfycence. A goodly interlude and a mery devysed and made
by mayster Skelton, poete laureate late deceasyd. (Rastell.)

Also a reprint of Rastell's edition, 1821, and E.E.T.S. edition, by
Robert L. Ramsay, 1908.

Here after foloweth the boke of Phyllip Sparowe compyled by
mayster Skelton, Poete Laureate. Prynted at London at the
poultry by Rychard Kele. (1550?)

Also editions by Antony Kitson, Abraham Veale, John Walley, and
John Wyght.

Here after foloweth certaine bokes cōpyled by mayster Skeltō,
whose names here after shall appere:
Speake, Parot.

The death of the noble Prynce, Kynge Edwarde the fourth.

A treatyse of the Scottes.

Ware the Hawke.

The Tunnyng of Elynoure Rummyngh.

Imprynted at London, in Crede Lane, by John King and Thomas Marche. (1565?)

Also an edition by Richard Lant, for Henry Tab.

Here after followeth a lytell boke called Colyn Cloute compyled . . .
etc. Imprinted at London by me Richarde Kele dwelling in the
powltry at the long shop under saynt Myldredes chyrche. (1550?)

Other editions by Wyghte, Veale, Kytson, and Thomas Godfray.

Here after foloweth a lytell boke, which hath to name, Why come
ye nat to courte, compiled . . . etc. . . . Richard Kele. (1550?)

Other editions by Wyght, Kytson, Veale, John Wallye, and Robert
Toy.

Pithy pleasaunt and profitable workes of maister Skelton, Poete
Laureate. Now collected and newly published. Anno 1568.
Imprinted at London in Fletestreate, neare unto saint Dunstones
churche by Thomas Marshe.

Elynour Rummin: the famous ale-wife of England. Harlian
Miscell., vol. i., 1746. Now singe we, as we were wont, etc.,
a black letter vol. of *Christmas Carols—Bibliograph. Miscell.*,
Bliss, 1813.

The Manner of the World now a dayes—Imprinted Copland
Also in *Old Ballads*, Collier, 1840.

Pithy Pleasaunt and profitable works of Maister Skelton, 1736.
(A very inaccurate reprint of Marsh.) Edited by J. Bowle.

Also a reprint of this in Chalmer's *English Poets*, 1810.

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The Poetical Works of John Skelton, with Notes and Some Account
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the edition of A. Dyce. Three vols., Boston, Mass., 1856.

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The Tunning of Elynour Rumming, with decorations by Pearl Binder, Fanfrolico Press, London, 1928.

See also *Merrie Tales of Skelton* (a chapbook), 1564.

MANUSCRIPTS

Of the death of the noble prince, King Edward the forth. (In a volume belonging to Miss Currer in which Dyce found a new stanza.)

Upon the doulourus dethe and much lamentable chaunce of the most honourable Erle of Northumberland. MS. Reg. I, 8 D ii., fol. 165, B.M.

Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale. Fairfax MS., Add. MSS. 5465, fol. 109, B.M.

Poems against Garnesche. MS. Harl. 367, fol. 101.

Wofully araid. Fairfax MS., Add. MSS. 5465, fols. 76 and 86, B.M.

Also manuscript copy in a very old hand on the fly-leaves of *Boetius de Discip. Schol.*, etc., 1496 (Heber collection), which supplied Dyce with several new stanzas.

I, liber, et propera. regem tu pronus adora, etc. MS. C.C.C. No. ccccxxii. of Nasmyth's *Catal.*, p. 400 (vol. i., 141).

Salve plus decies quam sunt momenta dierum, etc., Add. MSS. 4787, fol. 224 (vol. i., 177), B.M.

Colyn Cloue. MS. Harl. 2252, fol. 147.

Garlande of Lurell. MS. Cott. Vit. EX., fol. 200 – very imperfect.

Speake, Parrot. MS. Harl. 2252, fol. 133 – from which Dyce got much new material.

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Methodos Skeltonidis leaureati, sc. Praecepta quaedam moralia Henrico principi, postea Henr. viii. Dat. apud Eltham A.D. MDI. Principium deest.

Carmen ad principem, quando insignitus erat ducis Ebor titulo. Pr. "Si quid habes, mea Musa."

Piece "Mistress Anne, I am your man." MS. Trin. Coll., Cam., K. 347 (on fly-leaf).

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Piece "Petually Constrained am I" (To His Wife). Printed in *Athenaeum*, November 29th, 1873, from Heber M.S. belonging to W. Bragge of Sheffield.

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ON THE DEATH OF THE NOBLE PRINCE, KING EDWARD THE FOURTH

*Miseremini me,*¹ ye that be my friends!

This world hath conforméd me down to fall.
How may I endure, when that every thing ends?

What creature is born to be eternall?

Now there's no more but "Pray for me all!"
Thus say I, Edward, that late was your king,

And twenty two years ruled this imperiall,
Some unto pleasure, and some to no liking.

Mercy I aské of my misdoing:

What availeth it, friends, to be my foe,
Sith I cannot resist, nor amend your complaining?

*Quia, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio!*²

I sleep now in mould, as it is naturall

That earth unto earth hath his reverture.
What ordained God to be terestriall

Without recourse to the earth of nature?

Who to live ever may himself assure?
What is it to trust on mutability,

Sith that in this world nothing may endure?
For now am I gone, that late was in prosperity:
To presume thereupon it is but a vanity,

Not certain, but as a cherry-fair,³ full of woe:
Reigned not I of late in great felicity?

Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio!

Where was in my life such one as I

While Lady Fortune with me had continuance?

Granted not she me to have victory,

In Engeland to reign, and to contribute France?

¹Pity me.

²Since, lo, in dust sleep I now

³a cherry-wake.

⁴to lay France under tribute.

ELEGIES AND PRAYERS

She took me by the hand and led me a dance,
 And with her sugared lips on me she smiled;
 But, what for her dissembled countenance,
 I could not beware till I was beguiled:
 Now from this world she hath me exiled
 When I was lothest hence for to go,
 And I am in age but, as who saith, a child,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio!

I see well they live that double my years:
 Thus dealéd this world with me as it list,
 And hath me made, to you that be my peers,
 Example to think on, had I wist.
 I storéd my coffers and also my chest.
 With taskés¹ taking of the commonalty;
 I took their treasure, but of their prayers missed;
 Whom I beseech with pure humility
 For to forgive and have on me pity:
 I was your king, and kept you from your foe.
 I would now amend, but that will not be,
Quia, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio!

I had enough, I held me not content
 Without remembránce that I should die;
 And more ever to increase was mine intent,
 I knew not how long I should it occupy²:
 I made the Tower strong, I wist not why;
 I knew not to whom³ I purchased Tattershall;
 I amended Dover on the mountain high,
 And London I provoked to fortify the wall;
 I made Nottingham a place full royall,
 Windsor, Eltham, and many other mo:
 Yet, at the last, I went from them all,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio!

Where is now my conquest and my victory?
 Where is my riches and my royal array?

¹taxes.²possess it, use it.³i.e. for whom.

Where be my coursers and my horses high?
 Where is my mirth, my solace, and my play?
 As vanity, to nought all is withered away.
 O Lady Bess, long for me may ye call!
 For we are departed¹ till doomēs day:
 But love ye that Lord that is sovereign of all.
 Where be my castles and buildings royall?
 But Windsōr alone,² now I have no mo,
 And of Eton the prayers perpetuall,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio!

Why should a man be proud or presume high?
 Saint Bernard thereof nobly doth treat,
 Saith a man is but a sack of stercorry,³
 And shall return unto wormēs meat.
 Why, what 'came of Alexander the Great?
 Or else of strongē Sampson, who can tell?
 Were not wormes ordained their flesh to frete⁴?
 And of Salomon, that was of wit the well?
 Absolon profferēd his hair for to sell,
 Yet for all his beauty wormēs eat him alsō;
 And I but late in honour did excel,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio!

I have played my pageant, now am I passed;
 Ye wot well all I was of no great yeld⁵:
 Thus all thing concluded shall be at the last:
 When Death approacheth, then lost is the field:
 Then sithen⁶ this world me no longer upheld,
 Nor nought would conserve me here in my place,
 In manus tuas, Domine,⁷ my spirit up I yield,
 Humbly beseeching thee, God, of thy grace!
 O ye courteous commons, your heartēs unbrace⁸:
 Benignly now to pray for me alsō:
 For right well you know your king I was,
Et, ecce, nunc in pulvere dormio!

¹parted. ²Edward IV was buried at Windsor. ³dung.
⁴gnaw. ⁵age. ⁶since. ⁷Into thy hands, Lord. ⁸open.

UPON THE DOLOROUS DEATH AND MUCH
LAMENTABLE CHANCE OF THE MOST
HONOURABLE EARL OF NORTHUMBERLAND

I wail, I weep, I sob, I sigh full sore
The deadly fate, the doleful destiny
Of him that is gone, alas, without restore,
Of the blood royall descending nobelly;
Whose lordship doubtless was slain lamentably
Thorough treason against him compassed and wrought,
True to his prince in word, in deed, and thought.

Of heavenly poets, O Clio called by name,
In the College of Muses goddess historiall,
Address thee to me which am both halt and lame
In elect utterance to make memoriall!
To thee for succour, to thee for help I call,
Mine homely rudeness and dryness to expell
With the freshè waters of Heliconè's well.

Of noble acts anciently enrolled
Of famous princes and lords of estate,
By thy report are wont to be extolled,
Registering truely every former date;
Of thy bountie after the usual rate
Kindle in me such plenty of thy nobless
These sorrowful ditties that I may shew express.

In seasons passed, who hath heard or seen
Of former writing by any president
That villeins hastards¹ in their furious tene,²
Fulfiled with malice of froward intent,
Confettered³ together of common consent
Falsely to slay their most singular good lord?
It may be registeréd of shameful record.

¹rash fellows.

²wrath.

³confederated.

So noble a man, so valiant lord and knight,
 Fulfilled with honour, as all the world doth ken;
 At his commandment which had both day and night
 Knights and squires, at every season when
 He call'd upon them, as menial household men:
 Were not these commons uncourteous karls of kind¹
 To slay their own lord? God was not in their mind!

And were not they to blame, I say, also,
 That were about him, his owen servants of trust,
 To suffer him slain of his mortall foe?
 Fled away from him, let him lie in the dust;
 They 'bode not till the reckoning were discussed.
 What should I flatter? what should I glose or paint?
 Fie, fie for shame, their hearts were too faint!

In England and France which greatly was redoubted,²
 Of whom both Flanders and Scotland stood in drede,
 To whom great estates obeyéd and lowted,³
 A meiny⁴ of rude villains made him for to bleed;
 Unkindly they slew him that holp them oft at need:
 He was their bulwark, their paves,⁵ and their wall,
 Yet shamefully they slew him: that shame may them befall!

I say, ye commoners, why were ye so stark mad?
 What frantic frenzy fell in your brain?
 Where was your wit and reason ye should have had?
 What wilful folly made you rise again?
 Your natural lord? alas, I cannot sayne.
 Ye armed you with will, and left your wit behind:
 Well may you be called commons most unkind!

He was your chieftain, your shield, your chief defence,
 Ready to assist you in every time of need;

¹churls by nature. ²dreaded. ³bowed. ⁴band.
⁵shield. ⁶against.

Your worship¹ depended of his excellence:
 Alas, ye madmen, too far ye did exceed;
 Your hap was unhappy, too ill was your speed.
 What movéd you against him to war or to fight?
 What ailed you to slay your lord against all right?

The ground of his quarrel was for his sovereign lord,
 The well concerning of all the whole land,
 Demanding such duties as needs must accord
 To the right of his prince, which should not be withstand;
 For whose cause ye slew him with your owen hand.
 But had his noblemen done well that day
 Ye had not been able to have said him nay.

But there was false packing, or else I am beguiled.
 How be it, the matter was evident and plain,
 For if they had occupiéed their spear and their shield
 This noble man doubtless had not been slain.
 But men say they were linkéd with a double chain,
 And held with the commoners under a cloak,
 Which kindled the wild fire that made all this smoke.

The commons renied² their taxes to pay,
 Of them demanded and asked by the king;
 With one voice importune they plainly said nay;
 They buskt them on a bushment³ themselves in bale⁴ to
 bring,
 Against the king's pleasure to wrestle or to wring;
 Bluntly as beastēs with boast and with cry.
 They said they forsed not,⁵ nor cared not to die.

The nobleness of the north, this valiant lord and knight,
 As man that was innocent of treachery or train,⁶

¹honour. ²refused. ³got ready in ambush. ⁴trouble.
⁵regarded it not. ⁶deceit.

Pressed forth boldly to withstand their might,
 And, like martial Hector, he fought them again,¹
 Vigorously upon them with might and with main,
 Trusting in noblemen that were with him there:
 But all they fled from him for falsehood or fear.

Barons, knights, squires, one and all,
 Together with servants of his family,
 Turned their backs, and let their master fall,
 Of whose life they counted not a fly:
 Take up whose wold,² for there they let him lie.
 Alas, his gold, his fee, his annual rent
 Upon such a sort was ill bestowed and spent!

He was environ'd about on every side
 With his enemies, that were stark mad and wood³;
 Yet whiles he stood he gave them woundes wide.
 Alas for ruth! what though his mind were good,
 His courage manly, yet there he shed his blood:
 All left alone, alas, he fought in vain!
 For cruelly among them there he was slain.

Alas for pity that Percy thus was spilt,⁴
 The famous Earl of Northumberland!
 Of knightly prowess the sword, pommel, and hilt,
 The mighty lion 'doubted⁵ by sea and land:
 O dolorous chance of Fortune's froward hand!
 What man, rememb'ring how shamefully he was slain,
 From bitter weeping himself can restrain?

O cruel Mars, thou deadly god of war!
 O dolorous Tuesday⁶ dedicate to thy name,
 When thou shook thy sword so noble a man to mar!
 O ground ungracious, unhappy be thy fame,
 Which wert endyéd with red blood of the same
 Most noble earl! O foul misuséd ground
 Whereon he gat his final deadly wound! •

¹fought against them. ²take him up who would. ³frantic.
⁴destroyed. ⁵redoubted, feared. ⁶i.e. Mardi.

O Atropos, of the fatal sister's three,
Goddess most cruel unto the life of man,
All merciless, in thee is no pitie!

O homicide, which slayest all that thou can,
So forcibly upon this earl thou ran
That with thy sword, enharpéd¹ of mortal dread,
Thou cut assunder his perfite vital thread!

My words unpolish'd be, naked and plain,
Of aureat poems they want illumining;
But by them to knowledge ye may attain
Of this lord's death and of his murdering;
Which whiles he lived had foison of everything,
Of knights, of squires, chief lord of tower and town,
Till fickle Fortune began on him to frown.

Paregal² to dukes, with kings he might compare,
Surmounting in honour all earlés he did exceed;
To all countries about him report me I dare;
Like to Aeneas benign in word and deed,
Valiant as Hector in every martial need,
Provident, discreet, circumspect, and wise,
Till the chance ran against him of Fortune's double dice.

What needeth me for to extol his fame
With my rude pen encanckered all with rust,
Whose noble acts shew worshiply his name,
Transcending far mine homely Muse, that must
Yet somewhat write, surprised with heartly lust,³
Truly reporting his right noble estate,
Immortally which is immaculate?

His noble blood never destainéd was,
True to his prince for to defend his right,
Doubtless hating false matters to compâss,
Traitory[•]and treason he banish'd out of sight,
With truth to meddle was all his whole delight,

¹edged with.

²Equal.

³overcome with grief.

As all his country can testify the same:
To slay such a lord, alas, it was great shame!

If the whole choir of the Muses nine
In me all only were set and comprised,
Enbreathed with the blast of influence divine,
As perfittely as could be thought or devised:
To me also although it were promised
Of laureat Phoebus wholly the eloquence,
All were too little for his magnificence.

O young lion, but tender yet of age,
Grow and increase, remember thine estate;
God thee assist unto thine heritage,
And give thee grace to be more fortunate!
Against rebellion's arm thee to make debate;
And, as the lion, which is of beastēs king,
Unto thy subjects be courteous and benign.

I pray God send thee prosperous life and long,
Stable thy mind constant to be and fast,
Right to maintain, and to resist all wrong:
All flattering faytors¹ abhor and from thee cast;
Of foul detraction God keep thee from the blast!
Let double dealing in thee have no place,
And be not light of credence in no case.

With heavy cheer, with dolorous heart and mind,
Each man may sorrow in his inward thought
This lord's death, whose peer is hard to find,
Algife² England and France were thorough sought.
All kings, all princes, all dukes, well they ought,
Both temporal and spiritual, for to complain
This noble man that cruelly was slain.

More specially barons, and those knightēs bold,
And all other gentlemen with him entertained

¹dissemblers.

²Although.

In fee, as menial men of his househōld,
 Whom he as lord worshiply maintained:
 To sorrowful weeping they ought to be constrained
 As oft as they call to their remembrance
 Of their good lord the fate and deadly chance.

O peerless Prince of heaven imperiall,
 That with one word formed all things of nought!
 Heaven, hell, and earth obey unto thy call;
 Which to thy resemblance wond'rously hast wrought
 All mankind, whom thou full dear hast bought,
 With thy blood precious our finance did'st pay,
 And us redeemēd from the fiendēs prey;

To thee pray we, as Prince incomparable,
 As thou art of mercy and pity the well,
 Thou bring unto thy joy interminable
 The soul of this lord from all danger of hell,
 In endless bliss with thee to 'bide and dwell
 In thy palace above the orient,
 Where thou art Lord and God omnipotent.

O Queen of Mercy, O Lady full of grace,
 Maiden most pure, and Goddess Mother dear,
 To sorrowful hearts chief comfort and soláce,
 Of all women O flower withouten peer!
 Pray to thy Son above the starēs clear,
 He to vouchsafe, by thy mediation,
 To pardon thy servant, and bring to salvation.

In joy triumphant the heavenly hierarchy,
 With all the whole sort¹ of that glorious place,
 His soul may receive into their company,
 Thorough bounty of Him that formēd all soláce:
 Well of pity, of mercy, and of grace,
 The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
 In Trinitate one God of mightēs most!

¹company.

ON TIME

Ye may hear now, in this rime,
How every thing must have a time.

Time is a thing that no man may resist;
Time is transitory and irrevocable;
Who sayeth the contrary, Time passeth as him list¹;
Time must be taken in season covenable²:
Take Time when Time is, for Time is aye mutable;
All thing hath time who can for it provide;
Bide for Time who will, for Time will no man bide.

Time to be sad, and time to play and sport;
Time to take rest by way of recreation;
Time to study, and time to use comfort;
Time of pleasure, and time of consolation:
Thus Time hath his time of divers manner fashion:
Time for to eat and drink for thy repast;
Time to be liberal, and time to make no wast:

Time to travail, and time for to rest;
Time for to speak, and time to hold thy peace:
Time would be uséd when Time is best;
Time to begin, and time for to cease;
And when time is, to put thyself in prease,³
And when time is, to hold thyself aback:
For time well spent can never have lack.

The rootēs take their sap in time of vere⁴;
In time of summer flowers fresh and green;
In time of harvest men their cornē shere;
In time of winter the north wind waxeth keen,
So bitterly biting the flowers be not seen:
The calends of Janus, with his frostēs hoar,
That time is when people must live upon the store.

¹as pleases him.

²fit.

³press, throng.

⁴spring.

WOEFULLY ARRAYED

Woefully arrayed,
My blood, man,
For thee ran,
It may not be nay'd¹:
My body blue and wan,
Woefully arrayed.

Behold me, I pray thee, with thy whole reason,
And be not so hard-hearted, and for this encheason,²
Sith I for thy soul sake was slain in good season,
Beguiled and betrayed by Judas' false treason:

Unkindly entreated,
With sharp cord sore fretted,
The Jewés me threatened:
They mowéd,³ they grinned, they scornéd me,
Condemné to death, as thou may'st see,
Woefully arrayed.

Thus naked am I nailéd, O man, for thy sake!
I love thee, then love me; why sleepest thou? awake!
Remember my tender heart-root for thee brake,
With painés my veinés constrained to crake⁴:

Thus tuggéd to and fro,
Thus wrappéd all in woe,
Whereas never man was so,
Entreated thus in most cruel wise,
Was like a lamb offered in sacrifice,
Woefully arrayed.

Of sharp thorn I have worn a crown on my head,
So painéd, so strainéd, so ruefull, so red,
Thus bobbéd,⁵ thus robbéd, thus for thy love dead,

¹denied. . . ²cause. . . ³mouthed. . . ⁴crack. . . ⁵beaten.

Unfeignéd I deignéd my blood for to shed:
 My feet and handés sore
 The sturdy nailés bore:
 What might I suffer more
 Than I have done, O man, for thee?
 Come when thou list, welcome to me,
 Woefully arrayed.

Of record thy good Lord I have been and shall be:
 I am thine, thou art mine, my brother I call thee.
 Thee love I entirely – see what is befall'n me!
 Sore beating, sore threatening, to make thee, man, all free:
 Why art thou unkind?
 Why hast not me in mind?
 Come yet and thou shalt find
 Mine endléss mercie and grace –
 See how a spear my heart did race,¹
 Woefully arrayed.

Dear brother, no other thing I of thee desire
 But give me thine heart free to reward mine hire:
 I wrought thee, I bought thee from eternal fire:
 I pray thee array thee toward my high empire
 Above the orient,
 Whereof I am regent,
 Lord God omnipotent,
 With me to reign in endless wealth:
 Remember, man, thy soul's health.

Woefully arrayed,
 My blood, man,
 For thee ran,
 It may not be nay'd:
 My body blue and wan,
 Woefully arrayed.

¹wound.

PRAYER TO THE FATHER OF HEAVEN

O Radiant Luminary of light interminable,
Celestial Father, potential God of might,
Of heaven and earth O Lord incomparable,
Of all perfections the Essential most perfite!
O Maker of mankind, that forméd day and night,
Whose power imperial comprehendeth every place!
Mine heart, my mind, my thought, my whole delight
Is, after this life, to see thy glorious Face.

Whose magnificence is incomprehensible,
All arguments of reason which far doth exceed,
Whose Deity doubtless is indivisible,
From whom all goodness and virtue doth proceed,
Of thy support all créatures have need:
Assist me, good Lord, and grant me of thy grace
To live to thy pleasure in word, thought, and deed,
And, after this life, to see thy glorious Face.

TO THE SECOND PERSON

O benign Jesu, my sovereign Lord and King,
The only Son of God by filiation,
The Second Person withouten beginning,
Both God and man, our faith maketh plain relation,
Mary thy mother, by way of incarnation,
Whose glorious passion our soulēs doth revive,
Against all bodily and ghostly tribulation
Defend me with thy piteous woundēs five.

O peerless Prince, painēd to the death,
Ruefully rent, thy body wan and blo,¹
For my redemption gave up thy vital breath,
Was never sorrow like to thy deadly woe!
Grant me, out of this world when I shall go,
Thine endless mercy for my preservative:
Against the world, the flesh, the devil also,
Defend me with thy piteous woundēs five.

¹livid.

TO THE HOLY GHOST

O Fiery Fervence, inflamé with all grace,
Enkindling hearts with brandés charitable,
The endless reward of pleasure and solace,
To the Father and the Son thou are communicable
In unitate which is inseparable!
O water of life, O well of consolation!
Against all suggestions deadly and damnable
Rescue me, good Lord, by your preservation.

To whom is appropriated the Holy Ghost by name,
The Third Person, one God in Trinity,
Of perfect love thou art the ghostly flame:
Of mirror of meekness, peace, and tranquility,
My comfort, my counsel, my perfect charity!
O water of life, O well of consolation,
Against all stormés of hard adversity
Rescue me, good Lord, by thy preservation.

UPON A DEAD MAN'S HEAD

*Sent to him from an honourable gentlewoman for a token,
he devised this ghostly meditation in English covenable, in
sentence commendable, lamentable, lacrimable, profitable for
a soul.*

Your ugly token
My mind hath broken
From worldly lust:
For I have discust
We are but dust,
And die we must.

It is general
To be mortal:
I have well espied
No man may him hide
From Death hollow-eyed,
With sinews witheréd,
With bonés shiveréd,
With his worm-eaten maw,
And his ghastly jaw
Gasping aside,
Naked of hide,
Neither flesh nor fell.¹

Then, by my counsell,
Look that ye spell
Well this gospell:
For whereso we dwell
Death will us quell,
And with us mell.²

For all our pampered paunches
There may no fraunchis,³
Nor worldly bliss,

¹skin.

²meddle.

³franchise.

ELEGIES AND PRAYERS

Redeem us from this:
 Our days be dated
 To be check-mated
 With draughtes of death
 Stopping our breath:
 Our eyen sinking,
 Our bodies stinking,
 Our gummēs grinning,
 Our soules brinning.¹
 To whom, then, shall we sue,
 For to have rescue,
 But to sweet Jesu
 On us then for to rue?

O goodly Child
 Of Mary mild,
 Then be our shield!
 That we be not exiled
 To the dun dale
 Of bootless bale,²
 Nor to the lake
 Of fiendēs blake.³

But grant us grace
 To see thy Face,
 And to purchase
 Thine heavenly place,
 And thy palace
 Full of solace
 Above the sky
 That is so high,
 Eternally
 To behold and see
 The Trinitie!

Amen.

Myrres vous y.

¹burning.

²sorrow.

³black.

TO HIS WIFE¹

'Petually
Constrained am I
With weeping eye
To mourn and 'plain,

That we so nigh
Of progeny²
So suddenly
Should part in twain.

When ye are gone
Comfort is none,
But all alone
Endure must I.

With grievly grone
Making my mone,
As it were one
That should needs die.

What chance³ suddein,
So doth me stay'n⁴
In every way'n
That for no thing

I cannot lay'n⁵,
Nor yet refrain
Mine eyes twain
From sore weeping!

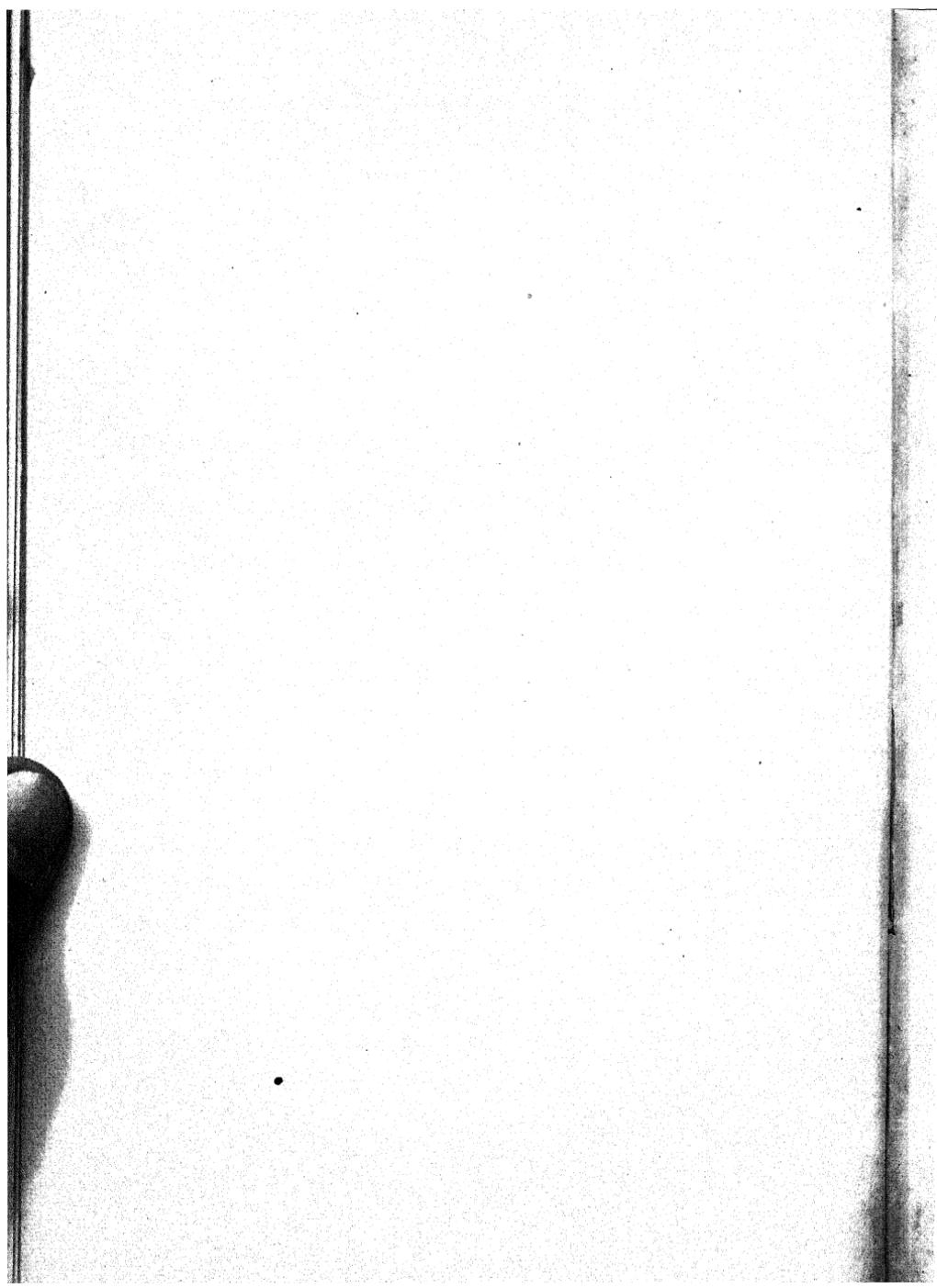
¹This poem not in Dyce. First printed in the *Athenaeum*, November 1873, from MS. belonging to Wm. Bragge of Sheffield (formerly Heber's).

²soon to have children.

³calamity.

⁴bind.

⁵rest.



NOW SING WE, AS WE WERE WONT

Now sing we, as we were wont,
*Vexilla regis prodeunt.*¹

The King's banner on field is splay'd,
The cross's myst'ry cannot be nay'd,²
To whom our Saviour was betray'd,

And for our sake.

Thus saith he:

I suffer for thee,

My death I take.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

Behold my shanks, behold my knees,
Behold my head, arms, and thees,³
Behold of me nothing thou sees

But sorrow and pine⁴:

Thus was I spilt,⁵

Man, for thy guilt,

And not for mine.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

Behold my body, how Jews it dong⁶
With knots of whipcord and scourges strong:
As streams of a well the blood outsprought

On every side.

The knottes were knit

Right well with wit,

They made woundes wide

¹The King's banners are displayed.

²denied.

³thighs.

⁴pain.

⁵destroyed.

⁶struck.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

Man, thou shalt now understand,
 Of my head, both foot and hand,
 Are four c. and five thousand

Woundēs and sixty;
 Fifty and vii.
 Were told full even

Upon my body.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

Sith I for love bought thee so dear,
 As thou may see thyself here,
 I pray thee with a right good cheer

Love me again:
 That it likes¹ me
 To suffer for thee

Now all this pain.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

Man, understand now thou shall,
 Instead of drink they gave me gall,
 And eisell² mingled therewithall,

The Jewēs fell.
 Those pains on me
 I suffered for thee
 To bring thee fro hell.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

Now for thy life thou hast mislead,
 Mercy to ask be thou not adread:
 The least drop of blood that I for thee shed
 Might cleanse thee soon

¹pleases.

²vinegar.

Of all the sin
The world within

If thou haddest doon.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt

I was more wrother with Judas
For he would no mercy ask
Than I was for his trespass
When he me sold;

I was ever ready
To grant him mercy,
But he none wold.¹

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

Lo, how I hold mine arms abroad,
Thee to receive ready y-spread!
For the great love that I to thee had
Well may thou know.

Some love again
I would full fain
Thou wouldest to me show.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

For love I ask nothing of thee
But stand fast in faith, and sin thou flee,
And pain² to live in honestie

Both night and day;
And thou shalt have bliss
That never shall miss³

Withouten nay.⁴

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

¹would.

²strive.

³fail.

⁴Assuredly.

BALLADS AND DITTIES

Now, Jesu, for thy great goodness,
That for men suffered great hardness,
Save us from the devil's cruelty,
And to bliss us send,
And grant us grace
To see thy Face
Withouten end.

Now sing we, as we were wont,
Vexilla regis prodeunt.

A LAUD AND PRAISE MADE FOR OUR SOVEREIGN LORD THE KING

The Rose both White and Red
In one Rose now doth grow:
Thus thorough every sted¹
Thereof the fame doth blow.
Grace the seed did sow:
England, now gather floures,
Exclude now all doloures.

Noble Henry the Eight,
Thy loving sovereign lord,
Of kingēs line most straight
His title doth record:
In whom doth well accord
Alexis young of age,
Adrastus wise and sage,

Astrea, Justice hight,
That from the starry sky
Shall now come and do right.
This hundred year scantly
A man could not espy
That Right dwelt us among,
And that was the more wrong.

Right shall the foxes chare,²
The wolvēs, the bearēs also,
That wrought have much care,
And brought England in woe:
They shall worry no mo,
Nor root the Rosary³
By extort treachery.

¹place.

²chase away.

³Rose-tree.

BALLADS AND DITTIES

Of this our noble king
 The law they shall not break;
 They shall come to reckoning;
 No man for them will speak:
 The people durst not creke¹
 Their grefes to complain,
 They brought them in such pain.

Therefore no more they shall
 The commons overbace,²
 That wont were over all
 Both lord and knight to face³:
 For now the years of grace
 And wealth are come again,
 That maketh England fain.⁴

Adonis of fresh colour,
 Of youth the goodly floure,
 Our prince of high honour,
 Our paves,⁵ our succour,
 Our king, our emperour,
 Our Priamus of Troy,
 Our wealth, our worldly joy:

Upon us he doth reign,
 That maketh our heartes glad,
 As king most sovereign
 That ever England had;
 Demure, sober, and sad,⁶
 And Martis lusty knight;
 God save him in his right!

Amen.

¹make an outcry.

²over-awe.

³vaunt.

⁴glad.

•

⁵shield

⁶discreet.

ULLAY, ULLAY, LIKE A CHILD

With lullay, lullay, like a child,
Thou sleep'st too long, thou art beguiled.

My darling dear, my daisy floure,
Let me, quod he, lie in your lap.
Lie still, quod she, my paramoure,
Lie still hardlie,¹ and take a nap.
His head was heavy, such was his hap,
All drowsy dreaming, drowned in sleep,
That of his love he took no keep,
With hey lullay, lullay, like a child,
Thou sleep'st too long, thou art beguiled.

With ba, ba, ba! and bas, bas, bas!²
She cherished him both cheek and chin,
That he wist never where he was:
He had forgotten all deadly sin.
He wanted wit her love to win:
He trusted her payment and lost all his pay;
She left him sleeping and stole away,
With hey lullay, lullay, like a child,
Thou sleep'st too long, thou art beguiled.

The rivers rough, the waters wan,
She sparéd not to wet her feet;
She waded over, she found a man
That halséd³ her heartily and kissed her sweet:
Thus after her cold she caught a heat.
My love, she said, routeth⁴ in his bed;
Ywis⁵ he hath an heavy head,
With hey lullay, lullay, like a child,
Thou sleep'st too long, thou art beguiled.

¹with confidence.

²With kissings, and kiss me.

³embraced her.

⁴snores.

⁵Assuredly.

What dream'st thou, drunkard, drowsy pate?

Thy lust and liking is from thee gone;
Thou blinkard blowboll,¹ thou wakest too late,

Behold thou liest, luggard, alone!

Well may thou sigh, well may thou groan,
To deal with her so cowardly:

Ywis, pole hatchet,² she bleared thin eye.³

¹blink-eyed drunkard.

²a man who gossips around an ale-pole, the sign of an inn.

³did you in the eye.

THE ANCIENT ACQUAINTANCE, MADAM, BETWEEN US TWAIN

The ancient acquaintance, madam, between us twain,

The familiaritie, the former daliance,
Causeth me that I cannot myself refrain

But that I must write for my pleasant pastance¹:

Rememb'ring your passing goodly countenance,
Your goodly port, your beauteous visage,
Ye may be counted comfort of all corage.²

Of all your features favourable to make true description,

I am insufficient to make such enterprise:
For this dare I say, without contradiction,

That Dame Melanippe was never half so wise:

Yet so it is that a rumour begineth for to rise
How in good horsemen ye set your whole delight,
And have forgotten your old true loving knight.

With bound and rebound bouncingly take up

His gentle curtál, and set nougħt by small nags!
Spur up at the hinder girth, with, Gup, morell, ³ gup!

With, Jayst ye, jennet of Spain, for your tail wags!

Ye cast all your corage⁴ upon such courtly hags.

Have in⁵ sergeant farrier, my horse behind is bare;
He rideth well the horse – but he rideth better the mare!

Ware, ware, the mare winceth with her wanton heel!

She kicketh with her calkins and keyleth with a clench;

¹pastime. ²all hearts (*sic*). ³a black horse.

⁴affection. ⁵Bring in.

She goeth wide behind, and heweth¹ never a dele²:
 Ware galling in the withers, ware of that wrench³!
 It is perilous for a horseman to dig in the trench.
 This grieveth your husband, that right gentle knight,
 And so with your servantés he fiercely doth fight.

So fiercely he fighteth, his mind is so fell,
 That he driveth them down with dints on their day-
 watch;
 He bruiseth their brainpannés and maketh them to swell,
 Their browés all to-broken, such clappés they catch;
 Whose jealousy malicious maketh them to leap the hatch⁴;
 By their cognizance⁵ knowing how they serve a wily pie⁶:
 Ask all your neighbours whether that I lie.

It can be no counsel that is cried at the cross⁷:
 For your gentle husband sorrowful am I;
 Howbeit, he is not first hath had a loss:
 Advertising you, madam, to work more secretly,
 Let not all the world make an outcry:
 Play fair play, madam, and look ye play clean,
 Or else with great shame your game will be seen.

¹colours, blushes (perhaps). ²never a bit.

³wile – the passage is, of course, metaphorical, and refers to the lady's intimacy with her stablemen.

⁴the half-door of the stable. ⁵the badge worn by servants.

⁶magpie (double reference to the knight's coat of arms and to the lady).

⁷no secret that is proclaimed in the market-place.

KNOWLEDGE, ACQUAINTANCE, RESORT, FAVOUR WITH GRACE

Knowledge, acquaintance, resort, favour with grace;

Delight, desire, respite with liberty;

Corage¹ with lust, convenient time and space;

Disdains, distress, exiléd cruelty;

Wordés well set with good hability;

Demure demeanour, womanly of port;

Transcending pleasure, surmounting all disport;

Electuary arrested² to redress³

These fervourous axes,⁴ the deadly woe and pain
Of thoughtful heartés plunged in distress;

Refreshing mindés⁵ the April shower of rain;

Conduit of comfort, and well most soveréign;
Herber⁶ enverdured, continual fresh and green;
Of lusty summer the passing goodly queen;

The topaz rich and precious in virtué;

Your ruddies⁷ with ruddy rubies may compare;
Saphire of sadness, enveined with Indy blue;

The polished pearl your whiteness doth declare;

Diamond pointed to rase out heartly care;
Gain⁸ surfeitous suspect the emerald commendable;
Reluctant smaradge,⁹ object incomparable;

Encirclé mirror and perspective most bright;

Illuminéd with features far passing my report;
Radiant Hesperus, star of the cloudy night,

Lode-star to light these lovers to their port,
Gain dangerous stormés their ancor to support,

¹Affection. ²empowered. ³relieve. ⁴paroxysms.

⁵as (understood). ⁶Arbour. ⁷blushes.

⁸Against. ⁹a lighter coloured emerald

Their sail of solace most comfortably clad,
Which to behold maketh heavy hearts glad:

Remorse¹ have I of your most goodlihood,²
Of your behaviour courteous and benign,
Of your bounty and of your womanhood,
Which maketh my heart oft to leap and spring,
And to remember many a pretty thing:
But absence, alas, with trembling fear and dread
Abasheth me, albeit I have no need.

You I assure, absence is my foe,
My deadly woe, my painful heaviness;
And if ye list to know the cause why so
Open mine heart, behold my mind express:
I would ye could! then should ye see, mistress,
How there nis³ thing that I covet so fain
As to embrace you in mine armés twain.

Nothing earthly to me more desirous
Than to behold your beauteous countenance:
But, hateful Absence, to me so envious,
Though thou withdraw me from her by long distance,
Yet shall she never out of my remembrance:
For I have gravéd her within the secret wall
Of my true heart, to love her best of all!

¹Remembrance.

²perfect goodness.

³is not.

THOUGH YE SUPPOSE ALL JEOPARDIES ARE
PASSED

Though ye suppose all jeopardies are passed,
And all is done that ye lookéd for before,
Ware yet, I rede¹ you, of Fortune's double cast,
For one false point she is wont to keep in store,
And under the fell² oft festeréd is the sore:
That when ye think all danger for to pass
Ware of the lizard lieth lurking in the grass.

¹advise.

²skin.

GO, PITEOUS HEART, RASED WITH DEADLY WOE

Go, piteous heart, raséd¹ with deadly woe,
Piercéd with pain, bleeding with woundés smart,
Bewail thy fortune, with veinés wan and blo.²
O Fortune unfriendly, Fortune unkind thou art
To be so cruel and so overthwart,³
To suffer me so carefully to endure
That where I love best I dare not discure⁴!

One there is, and ever one shall be,
For whose sake my heart is sore diseaséd;
For whose love welcome disease to me!
I am content so all parties be pleaséd:
Yet, an God would, I would my pain were easéd!
But Fortune enforceth me so carefully to endure
That where I love best I dare not discure!

At the instance of a noble lady.

¹wounded. ²livid. ³perverse. ⁴discover (myself).

WOMANHOOD, WANTON, YE WANT

Womanhood, wanton, ye want:
Your meddling, mistress, is mannerless;
Plenty of ill, of goodness scant,
Ye rail at riot, reckless:
To praise your port it is needless;
For all your draf¹e yet and your dregs,
As well borne as ye full oft time begs.

Why so coy and full of scorn?
Mine horse is sold, I ween, you say;
My new furred gown, when it is worn . . .
Put up your purse, ye shall not pay!
By crede, I trust to see the day,
As proud as a pea-hen as ye spread,
Of me and other ye may have need.

Though angelic be your smiling,
Yet is your tongue an adder's tail,
Full like a scorpion stinging
All those by whom ye have avail.
Good mistress Anne, there ye do shail²:
What prate ye, pretty pige³snye⁴?
I trust to 'quite you ere I die!

Your key is meet for every lock,
Your key is common and hangeth out;
Your key is ready, we need not knock,
Nor stand long wresting there about;
Of your door-gate ye have no doubt:
But one thing is, that ye be lewd:
Hold your tongue now, all beshrewd!

To Mistress Anne, that farly sweet,⁴
That wones⁵ at The Key in Thame⁶s Street

¹refuse.

²walk crookedly.

³darling

⁴strange sweet one.

⁵dwells.

TO MISTRESS ANNE

Mistress Anne,
I am your man,
As you may well espy.
If you will be
Content with me,
I am your man.

But if you will
Keep company still
With every knave that comes by,
Then you will be
Forsaken of me,
That^a am your man.

But if you fain,
I tell you plain,
That^b I presently shall die,
I will not such
As loves too much,
That am your man.

For if you can
Love every man
That can flatter and lie,
Then are ye
No match for me,
That am your man.

For I will not take
No such kind of make^c,
(May all full well it trie^d!),
But off will ye cast
At any blast,
That am your man.

^aMS. Trin. Coll. Cam., o.2. 53, fol. 165b, first printed by Brie.
Skelton-Studien, Eng. Stud.

^b"I" in MS. ^c"If" in MS. ^dmate. ^eexperience.

JOLLY RUTTERKIN¹

Hoyda, jolly rutterkin,² hoyda!
Like a rutterkin hoyda.

Rutterkin is come unto our town
In a cloak without coat or gown,
Save a ragged hood to cover his crown,
 Like a rutter hoyda.

Rutterkin can speak no English,
His tongue runneth all on buttered fish,
Besmeared with grease about his dish,
 Like a rutter hoyda.

Rutterkin shall bring you all good luck,
A stoup of beer up at a pluck,³
Till his brain be as wise as a duck,
 Like a rutter hoyda.

When rutterkin from board will rise,
He will piss a gallon pot full a-twice,
And the overplus under the table of the new guise,
 Like a rutter hoyda.

¹From the Fairfax MS. (5465, B.M.), from which also is taken *Woefully Arrayed* and *Mannerly Margery*. Dyce says that "there is a probability" that this song was composed by Skelton. Moreover, in *Magnificence*, Courly Abusion comes in singing part of it. It is possible that Skelton would make his character quote one of his own songs. It is possible, too, that some of the other songs in this MS., still unprinted, are by Skelton. *Margaret Meek*, for instance, and another poem in the manner of *Woefully Arrayed*.

²Dashing fellow, gay spark. See Riot in *Bouge of Court*. ³gulp.

MANNERLY MARGERY MILK AND ALE

Ay, beshrew you! by my fay,
These wanton clerks be nice¹ alway!
Avaunt, avaunt, my popinjay!
What, will you do nothing but play?
Tilly vally straw, let be I say!
Gup, Christian Clout, gup, Jack of the Vale!
With Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale.

By God, ye be a pretty pode,²
And I love you an whole cart-load.
Straw, James Foder, ye play the fode,³
I am no hackney⁴ for your rode⁵:
Go watch a bull, your back is broad!
Gup, Christian Clout, gup, Jack of the Vale!
With Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale.

Ywis ye deal uncourteously;
What, would ye frumple⁶ me? now fy!
What, and ye shall be my pigestry?
By Christ, ye shall not, no hardely:
I will not be japéd⁷ bodily!
Gup, Christian Clout, gup, Jack of the Vale!
With Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale.

Walk forth your way, ye cost me nougħt;
Now have I found that I have sought:
The best cheap flesh that ever I bought.
Yet, for His love that all hath wrought,
Wed me, or else I die for thought.
Gup, Christian Clout, your breath is stale!
Go, Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale!
Gup, Christian Clout, gup, Jack of the Vale!
With Mannerly Margery Milk and Ale.

¹saucy.

²toad (perhaps).

³seducer.

⁴hack, whore.

⁵rod.

⁶rumple.

⁷joked with, in the sense of raped.

Here beginneth a little Treatise named

THE BOUGE OF COURT¹

The Prologue to the Bouge of Court

In autumn, when the sun in Virgine
By radiant heat enripéd hath our corn;
When Luna, full of mutability,
As emperess the diadem hath worn
Of our pole arctic, smiling half in scorn
At our folly and our unsteadfastness;
The time when Mars to warré him did 'dress,'²

I, calling to mind the great authority
Of poetès old, which full craftily,
Under as covert termès as could be,
Can touch a truth and cloak it subtily
With freshè utterance full sententiously,
Diverse of style, some spared not vice to wite,³
Some of morality nobly did endite;

Wherby I rede⁴ their renown and their fame
May never die, but evermore endure:
I was sore movéd to aforce⁵ the same,
But Ignorance full soon did me discure,⁶
And shewed that in this art I was not sure;
For to illumine, she said, I was too dull,
Advising me my pen away to pull,

And not to write: for he so will attain
Exceeding further than his conning⁷ is,

¹The Rewards of Court. ²prepare. ³blame.
⁴reckon. ⁵attempt. ⁶discover. ⁷knowledge.

THE BOUGE OF COURT

His head may be hard, but feeble is his brain,
 Yet have I knownen such ere this.
 But of reproach surely he may not miss
 That climbeth higher than he may footing have:
 What an he slide down, who shall him save?

Thus up and down my mind was drawen and cast,
 That I ne wist¹ what to do was best;
 So sore enwearied, that I was at the last
 Enforced to sleep and for to take some rest,
 And to lie down as soon as I me 'dressed.²
 At Harwich port slumb'ring as I lay
 In mine hostēs house, called Powers Key,

Methought I saw a ship, goodly of sail,
 Come sailing forth into the haven broad,
 Her tackeling rich and of high appareil:
 She cast an ancor, and there she lay at road.³
 Merchants her boarded to see what she had load.
 Therein they found royal merchandise,
 Fraughted with pleasure of what ye could devise.

But then I thought I would not dwell behind;
 Among all others I put myself in press.
 Then there could I none acquaintance find:
 There was much noise; anon one cried, "Cease!"
 Sharply commanding each man hold his peace.
 "Maisters," he said, "the ship that ye here see
 The Bouge of Court it hight for certaintie.

"The owner thereof is lady of estate
 Whose name to tell is Dame Saunce-pere⁴;
 Her merchandise is rich and fortunate,
 But who will have it must pay therefor dear;
 This royal chaffer⁵ that is shippéd here
 Is called Favour to stand in her good grace."
 Then should ye see there pressing in apace

¹knew not. ²prepared. ³in harbour.

⁴Peerless. ⁵merchandise.

Of one and other that would this lady see;
 Which sat behind a traves¹ of silkē fine,
 Of gold of tissue the finest that might be,
 In a throne which far clearér did shine
 Than Phoebus in his sphere celestine;
 Whose beautie, honour, goodly port
 I have too little cunning to report.

But of each thing there as I took heed,
 Among all other was written in her throne
 In gold letters, these words, which I did read:
Gardez le fortune, qui est maelz et bone!
 And, as I stood reading this verse myself alone,
 Her chief gentlewoman, Danger by her name,
 Gave me a taunt, and said I was to blame

To be so pert to press so proudly up:
 She said she trowed that I had eaten sauce;
 She asked if ever I drank of sauce's cup.
 And I then softly answered to that clause,
 That so to say I had given her no cause.
 Then asked she me, "Sir, so God thee speed,
 What is thy name?" and I said it was Drede.²

"What movéd thee," quod she, "hither to come?"
 "Forsooth," quod I, "to buy some of your ware."
 And with that word on me she gave a glome³.
 With browēs bent, and 'gan on me to stare
 Full dainously,⁴ and fro me she did fare,
 Leaving me standing as a mazéd man,
 To whom there came another gentlewoman:

Desire was her name, and so she me told,
 Saying to me, "Brother, be of good cheer,
 Abash you not, but hardly be bold,
 Avaunce yourself to approach and come near:
 What though our chaffer be never so dear,

¹curtain. ²Modesty. ³a frown. ⁴disdainfully.

THE BOUGE OF COURT

Yet I advise you to speak, for any drede¹:
 Who spareth to speak, in faith, he spareth to speed."

"Maistress," quod I, "I have none acquaintance
 That will for me be mediator and mean;
 And this another, I have but small substance."
 "Peace," quod Desire, "ye speak not worth a bean!
 If ye have not, in faith, I will you lene²
 A precious jewel, no richer in this land:
 Bon Aventure have here now in your hand.

"Shift now therewith, let see, as ye can
 In Bouge of Court chevisaunce³ to make;
 For I dare say that there nis earthly man
 But, an he can Bon Aventure take,
 There can no favour nor friendship him forsake;
 Bon Aventure may bring you in such case
 That ye shall stand in favour and in grace.

"But of one thing I warn you ere I go:
 She that steereth the ship, make her your friend."
 "Maistress," quod I, "I pray you tell me why so,
 And how I may that way and meanés find."
 "Forsooth," quod she, "however blow the wind,
 Fortune guideth and ruleth all our ship:
 Whom she hateth shall over the seaboard skip;

"Whom she loveth, of all pleasure is rich,
 Whiles she laugheth and hath lust for play;
 Whom she hateth, she casteth in the ditch,
 For when she frowneth, she thinketh to make a fray;
 She cherisheth him, and him she casteth away."
 "Alas," quod I, "how might I have her sure?"
 "In faith," quod she, "by Bon Aventure."

¹i.e. notwithstanding any fear you may feel.

²lend. ³achievement.

Thus, in a row, of merchants a great rout
 Sued to Fortune that she would be their friend:
 They throng in fast and flockéd her about;
 And I with them prayed her to have in mind.
 She promised to us all she would be kind:
 Of Bouge of Court she asketh what we would have,
 And we asked Favour, and Favour she us gave.

*Thus endeth the Prologue; and beginneth the
 Bouge of Court briefly compiled.*

DREDE

The sail is up, Fortune ruleth our helm,
 We want no wind to pass now over all;
 Favour we have tougher than any elm,
 That will abide and never from us fall.
 But under honey oft time lieth bitter gall:
 For, as methought, in our ship I did see
 Full subtil persons, in number four and three.

The first was Favell,¹ full of flattery,
 With fables false that well could feign a tale;
 The second was Suspect, which that daily
 Misdeemed each man, with face deadly and pale;
 And Harvy Hafter, that well could pick a male,²
 With other four of their affinity,
 Disdain, Riot, Dissimuler, Subtilty.

Fortune their friend, with whom oft she did dance;
 They could not fail, they thought, they were so sure;
 And oftentimes I would myself advance
 With them to make solace and pleasure.
 But my disport they could not well endure:
 They said they hated for to deal with Dredē.^{*}
 Then Favell 'gan with fair speach me to feed.

¹Cajolery.²purse.

FAVELL

"No thing earthly that I wonder so sore
 As of your conning,¹ that is so excellent;
 Deinte² to have with us such one in store,
 So virtuously that hath his dayés spent;
 Fortune to you gifts of grace hath lent:
 Lo, what it is a man to have conning!
 All earthly treasure it is surmounting.

"Ye be an apt man, as any can be found,
 To dwell with us, and serve my lady's grace;
 Ye be to her, yea, worth a thousand pound!
 I heard her speak of you within short space,
 When there were divers that sore did you menace;
 And, though I say it, I was myself your friend,
 For here be divers to you that be unkind.

"But this one thing: ye may be sure of me;
 For, by that Lord that bought dear all mankind,
 I cannot flatter, I must be plain to thee!
 An ye need ought, man, shew to me your mind,
 For ye have me whom faithful ye shall find;
 Whiles I have ought, by God, thou shalt not lack,
 And if need be, a bold word I dare crack!

"Nay, nay, be sure, whiles I am on your side
 Ye may not fall, trust me, ye may not fail.
 Ye stand in favour, and Fortune is your guide,
 And, as she will, so shall our great ship sail:
 These lewd cockwats³ shall nevermore prevail
 Against you hardly, therefore be not afraid.
 Farewell till soon, but no word that I said!"

¹learning.²i.e. It is a pleasure.³vile cuckolds.

DREDE

Then thanked I him for his great gentleness.
 But, as methought, he wear on him a cloak
 That linéd was with doubtful doubleness;
 Methought, of words that he had full a poke;
 His stomach stuffed oft times did reboke.¹
 Suspect, methought, met him at a braid,²
 And I drew near to hark what they two said.

"In faith," quod Suspect, "spake Drede no word of me?"
 "Why? what then? wilt thou hinder men to speak?
 He saith he cannot well accord with thee."
 "Tush," quod Suspect, "go play! him I ne recke!³"
 "By Christ," quod Favell, "Drede is sullen freke."
 What, let us hold him up, man, for a while!"
 "Yea so," quod Suspect, "he may us both beguile."

And when he came walking soberly,
 With hum and ha, and with a crooked look,
 Methought his head was full of jealousy,
 His eyen rolling, his handés fast they quoke;
 And to meward the straight way he took.
 "God speed, brother!" to me quod he then,
 And thus to talk with me he began.

SUSPECT

"Ye remember the gentleman right now
 That communed with you, methought a pretty space?
 Beware of him, for, I make God avow,
 He will beguile you and speak fair to your face.
 Ye never dwelt in such another place,
 For here is none that dare well another trust — •
 But I would tell you a thing, an I durst!

¹belch.²suddenly.³reck not.

"fellow."

"Spake he, i'faith, no word to you of me?
 I weet, an he did, ye would me tell.
 I have a favour to you, whereof it be
 That I must shew you much of my counsell.
 But I wonder what the devil of hell
 He said of me when he with you did talk!
 By mine advise use not with him to walk.

"The sovranest thing that any man may have
 Is little to say, and much to hear and see;
 For, but I trusted you, so God me save,
 I would no thing so plainē be:
 To you onlie, methink, I durst shrive me,
 For now am I plenarely¹ disposed
 To shew you things that may not be disclosed."

Then I assured him my fidelitie
 His counsel never to disclose,
 If he could find in heart to trustē me;
 Else I prayed him, with all my busy cure,
 To keep it himself, for then he might be sure
 That no man earthly could him betray,
 Whiles of his mind it were locked with the key.

"By God," quod he, "thus and thus it is . . ."
 And of his mind he shewed me all and some.
 "Farewell," quod he, "we will talk more of this . . ."
 So he departed where he would be come.
 I dare not speak, I promised to be dum.
 But, as I stood musing in my mind,
 Harvy Hafter came leaping, light as lind.²

Upon his breast he bear a versing-box,³
 His throat was clear, and lustily could fain.⁴
 Methought his gown was all furred with fox,
 And ever he sang, "*Sith I am nothing plain . . .*"
 To keep him from picking⁵ it was a greatē pain:

¹fully. ²linden-tree. ³dice-box. ⁴sing. ⁵stealing.

He gazed on me with his goatish beard,
When I looked at him my purse was half-afeard.

HARVY HAFTER

“Sir, God you save! why look ye so sad?¹?
What thing is that I may do for you?
A wonder thing that ye wax not mad:
For, an I study should as ye do now,
My wit would waste, I make God avow!
Tell me your mind: methink ye make a verse;
I could it scan, an ye would it rehearse!

“But to the point shortly to proceed,
Where hath your dwelling been ere ye came here?
For, as I trow, I have seen you indeed
Ere this, when that ye make me royal cheer.
Hold up the helm, look up, and let God steer:
I would be merry, what wind that ever blow!
Heave and how rumbelow, . . . row the boat, Norman, row!

“*Princes of youth* can ye sing by rote?
Or shall I sail with you? a fellowship assay?
For on the book I cannot sing a note.
Would to God it would please you some day
A ballad book before me for to lay,
And learn me to sing *re mi fa sol!*
And, when I fail, bob me on the noll.²

“Lo, what is to you a pleasure great
To have that conning and wayés that ye have!
By Goddess soul, I wonder how ye gate
So great plaisiré, or who to you it gave.
Sir, pardon me, I am an homely knave,
To be with you thus pert and thus bold:
But ye be welcome to our household!

¹serious.²bang me on the head.

"And, I dare say, there is no man therein
 But would be glad of your companie.
 I wist never man that so soon could win
 The favour that ye have with my ladie.
 I pray to God that it may never die:
 It is your fortune for to have that grace:
 As I be saved, it is a wonder case.

"For, as for me, I served here many a day
 And yet unneth¹ I can have my living:
 But I require you no wordē that I say²!
 For, an I know any earthly thing
 That is against you, ye shall have weeting.³
 And ye be welcome, sir, so God me save:
 I hope hereafter a friend of you to have."

DREDE

With that, as he departed so from me,
 Anon there met with him, as methought,
 A man, but wonderly beseen⁴ was he.
 He lookéd haughty; he set each man at nougħt;
 His gawdy garment with scornēs was all wrought;
 With indignation linéed was his hood:
 He frowned, as he would swear by Cockēs blood.⁵

He bit his lip, he lookéd passing coy;
 His face was belimmed⁶ as bees had him stung:
 It was no time with him to jape nor toy!
 Envy had wasted his liver and his lung,
 Hatred by the heart so had him wrung
 That he looked pale as ashes to my sight:
 Disdain, I ween, this comerous⁷ crab is hight.

¹scarcely. ²i.e. I beg you not to mention a word of what I say.

³knowledge of it. ⁴of strange appearance. ⁵God's blood.

⁶disfigured. ⁷troublesome.

To Harry Hafter, then, he spake of me,
 And I drew near to hark what they two said.
 "Now," quod Disdain, "as I shall saved be,
 I have great scorn, and am right evil apayed."¹
 Then quod Harry Hafter, "Why art thou so dismayed?"
 "By Christ," quod he, "for it is shame to say:
 To see yon Johan Dawes,² that came but yesterday,

"How he is now taken in conceit,³
 This Doctor Dawcock, I ween, he hight!
 By Goddes bones, but if we have some slight
 It is like he will stand in our light."
 "By God," quod Harry, "and it so happen might:
 Let us therefore shortly at a word
 Find some means to cast him overboard."

"By Him that me bought," then quod Disdain,
 "I wonder sore he is in such conceit!"
 "Turd!" quod Hafter, "I will thee nothing layne,⁴
 There must for him be laid some pretty bait;
 We twain, I trow, be not without deceit:
 First pick a quarrel, and fall out with him then,
 And so outface him with a card of ten."⁵

Forthwith he made on me a proud assault,
 With scornful look movéd all in mood⁶;
 He went about to take me in a fault;
 He frowned, he stared, he stampéd where he stood.
 I looked on him, I wend he had been wood.⁷
 He set the arm proudly under the side,
 And in this wise he 'gan with me to chide.

¹ill-pleased. ²i.e. simpleton, daw, as also in Dawcock.

³in favour. ⁴conceal. ⁵i.e. a trump card.

⁶anger. ⁷I thought . . . mad.

DISDAIN

"Rememb'rest thou what thou said yesternight?
 Wilt thou abide by the wordés again?
 By God, I have of thee now great despite!
 I shall thee anger once in every vein:
 It is great scorn to see such an hayne¹
 As thou art, one that came but yesterday,
 With us old servants suchē maisters to play!"

"I tell thee, I am of countenance²:
 What wenest I were? I trow thou know not me!
 By Goddēs wounds, but for displeasance,
 Of my quarrél soon would I vengéd be.
 But no force,³ I shall once meet with thee.
 Come when it will, oppose thee I shall,
 Whatsomever adventure thereof fall."

"Trowest thou, drevil⁴ I say, thou gawdy knave,
 That I have deinte⁵ to see thee cherished thus?
 By Goddēs side, my sword thy head shall shave!
 Well, once thou shalt be charmed,⁶ ywus.
 Nay, straw for tales, thou shalt not rule us:
 We be thy betters, and so thou shalt us take,
 Or we shall thee out of thy clothēs shake!"

DREDE

With that came Riot, rushing all at once,
 A rusty gallant, to-ragged and to-rent;
 And on the board he whirled a pair of bones,⁷
Quater trey dews he clattered as he went:
 "Now have at all, by Saint Thomas of Kent!"
 And ever he threw and cast I wote n're what:
 His hair was growen thorough out his hat.

¹low fellow. ²a man of position. ³no matter.
⁴drudge. ⁵pleasure. ⁶quelled. ⁷dice.

Then I beheld how he disguisedé was¹:

His head was heavy for watching over night,
His eyen bleered, his face shone like a glass;
His gown so short that it ne cover might
His rump, he went so all for summer light!
His hose was garded² with a list of green,
Yet at the knee they were broken, I ween.

His coat was checked with patches red and blue;

Of Kirby Kendal³ was his short demie⁴;
And aye he sang, *In faith, deacon, thou crew;*
His elbow bare, he wear his gear so nigh⁵;
His nose a-dropping, his lippés were full dry;
And by his side his whinard⁶ and his pouch,
The devil might dance wherein for any crowch.⁷

Counter⁸ he could *O lux* upon a pot,

An ostrich feather of a capon's tail
He set up freshly upon his hat aloft:
"What revel rout!" quod he, an' gan to rail
How oft he had hit Jennet on the tail,
Of Phillis featuous,⁹ and little pretty Kate,
How oft he had knocked at her clickéd gate.

What should I tell more of his ribaldry?

I was ashamed so to hear him prate:
He had no pleasure but in harlotry.

"Ay," quod he, "in the devil's date,
What art thou? I saw thee now but late."
"Forsooth," quod I, "in this court I dwell now."
"Welcome," quod Riot, "I make God avow.

¹how wretched he was. ²braided.

³Famous for his manufacture of green cloth. ⁴vest.

⁵clothes so thin (through wear). ⁶sword.

⁷any piece of money. ⁸drum a tattoo (here). ⁹dainty.

"And, sir, in faith why com'st not us among
 To make thee merry, as other fellows done?
 Thou must swear and stare, man, all day long,
 And wake all night, and sleep till it be noon;
 Thou mayest not study, or muse on the moon;
 This world is nothing but eat, drink, and sleep,
 And thus with us good company to keep.

"Pluck up thine heart upon a merry pin,
 And let us laugh a pluck or twain at nale¹:
 What the devil, man, mirth is here within!
 What, lo man, see here of dice a bale²!
 A birdeling-cast for that is in thy male!
 Now have at all that lieth upon the board!
 Fie on these dice, they be not worth a turd!

"Have at the hasard, or at the dozen brown,
 Or else I pass a penny to a pound!
 Now, would to God, thou would lay money down!
 Lord, how that I would cast it full round!
 Ay, in my pouch a buckle I have found,
 The arms of Callais, I have no coin nor cross³!
 I am not happy, I run aye on the loss.

"Now run must I to the stewēs side⁴
 To weet if Malkin, my leman,⁵ have got ought:
 I let her to hire, that men may on her ride,
 Her armēs easy⁶ far and near is sought:
 By Goddes side, since I her hither brought
 She hath got me more money with her tail
 Than hath some ship that into Bordews' sail:

"Had I as good an horse as she is a mare
 I durst adventure to journey thorough France;

¹at the ale-house. ²a pair of dice.

³Many coins were marked with a cross. ⁴to the brothel.

⁵my sweetheart. ⁶easily won favours(?). ⁷Bordeaux.

Who rideth on her, he needeth not to care,
 For she is trusséd for to break a lance:
 It is a curtal that well can winch and prance.
 To her will I now all my poverty allege,
 And, till I come, have here my hat in pledge."

DREDE

Gone is this knave, this ribald foul and lewd.
 He ran as fast as ever that he might.
 Unthriftiness in him may well be shewed,
 For whom Tyburn groaneth both day and night.
 And, as I stood and cast aside my sight,
 Disdain I saw with Dissimulation
 Standing in sad¹ communication.

But there was pointing and nodding with the head,
 And many wordēs said in secret wise;
 They wandered aye, and stood still in no stead:
 Methought alway Dissimuler did devise.
 Me passing sore mine heart then 'gan agrise,²
 I deemed and dread their talking was not good.
 Anon Dissimuler came where I stood.

Then in his hood I saw there faces twain:
 That one was lean and like a pinéd ghost,
 That other looked as he would me have slain;
 And to meward as he 'gan for to coast,
 When that he was even at me almost,
 I saw a knife hid in his one sleeve,
 Whereon was written this word, *Mischief*.

And in his other sleeve, methought, I saw
 A spoon of gold, full of honey sweet,
 To feed a fool, and for to prove a daw³;
 And on that sleeve these wordēs were writ,
A false abstract cometh from a false concrete.

¹earnest.²shudder.³to try a simpleton.

His hood was long, his cope¹ was russet gray:
These were the words that he to me did say.

DISSIMULATION

"How do ye, maister? ye look so soberly!
As I be savéd at the dreadful day,
It is a perilous vice, this envy.
Alas, a conning man he dwell may
In no place well, but fools with him fray.
But as for that, conning hath no foe
Save him that nought can,² Scripture saith so.

"I know your virtue and your literature
By that little conning that I have:
Ye be maligned sore, I you ensure,
But ye have craft yourself alway to save.
It is great scorn to see a misproud knave
With a clerke³ than conning is to prate:
Let them go lose them, in the devil's date!

"For albeit that this 'long not to me,
Yet on my back I bear such lewd dealing:
Right now I spake with one, I trow, I see –
But what – a straw! I may not tell all thing!
By God, I say there is great heart-burning
Between the persón ye wot of and you.
Alas, I could not deal so with a Jew!

"I would each man were as plain as I!
It is a world,⁴ I say, to hear of some:
I hate this feigning! fie upon it, fie!
A man cannot wot where to be come:
Ywis I could tell – but humerly, hum!
I dñe not speak, we be so laid in wait,
For all our court is full of deceit.

¹cape. ²knows nothing. ³scholar. ⁴It is a wonder.

"Now by Saint Francis, that holy man and frere,¹
 I hate these ways against you that they take!
 Were I as you, I would ride them full near,
 And, by my troth, but if an end they make,
 Yet will I say some wordes for your sake
 That shall them anger, I hold thereon a groat:
 For some shall ween be hanged by the throat!"²

"I have a stopping oyster³ in my poke,
 Trust me, an if it come to a need!
 But I am loath for to raise a smoke
 If ye could be otherwise agreed.
 And so I would it were, so God me speed,
 For this may breed to a confusion
 Without God make a good conclusion.

Nay, see where yonder standeth t'other man!
 A flattering knave and false he is, God wot;
 The drevil standeth to harken, an he can.
 It were more thrift he bought him a new coat;
 It will not be, his purse is not on float⁴:
 All that he weareth it is borrowed ware,
 His wit is thin, his hood is threadbare.

"More could I say, but what this is enow⁵:
 Adew till soon, we shall speak more of this.
 Ye must be ruled as I shall tell you how;
 Amends maybe of that is now amiss.
 And I am yours, sir, so have I bliss,
 In every point that I can do or say:
 Give me your hand, farewell, and have good-day!"

¹friar. ²think themselves hanged.

³that which will stop their mouths. ⁴flowing, full

⁵but that this is enough.

DREDE

Suddenly, as he departed me fro,
 Came pressing in one in a wonder array.
 Ere I was ware, behind me he said, "BO!"
 Then I, astonéd¹ of that sudden fray,
 Start all at once, I liked nothing his play:
 For, if I had not quickly fled the touch,
 He had plucked out the nobles of my pouch.

He was trusséd in a garment strait:
 I have not seen such another page,
 For he could well upon a casket wait;
 His hood all pounced² and garded like a cage;
 Light lime-finger! he took none other wage.
 "Harken," quod he, "lo here mine hand in thine!
 To us welcome thou art, by Saint Quintine.

DECEIT

"But, by that Lord that is one, two, and three,
 I have an errand to round³ in your ear . . .
 He told me so, by God, ye may trust me,
 Parde, remember when ye were there,
 For I winked on you – wot ye not where?
 In *A loco*, I mean *juxta B*:
 Who is him that is blind and may not see!

"But to hear the subtilty and the craft,
 As I shall tell you, if ye will hark again . . . !
 And when I saw the whoresons would you haft,
 To hold mine hand, by God, I had great pain:
 For forthwith there I had him slain,
 But⁴ that I dread murder would come out:
 Who dealeth with shrews⁵ hath need to look about!"

¹astonished. ²perforated. ³whisper. ⁴trick you. ⁵rascals.

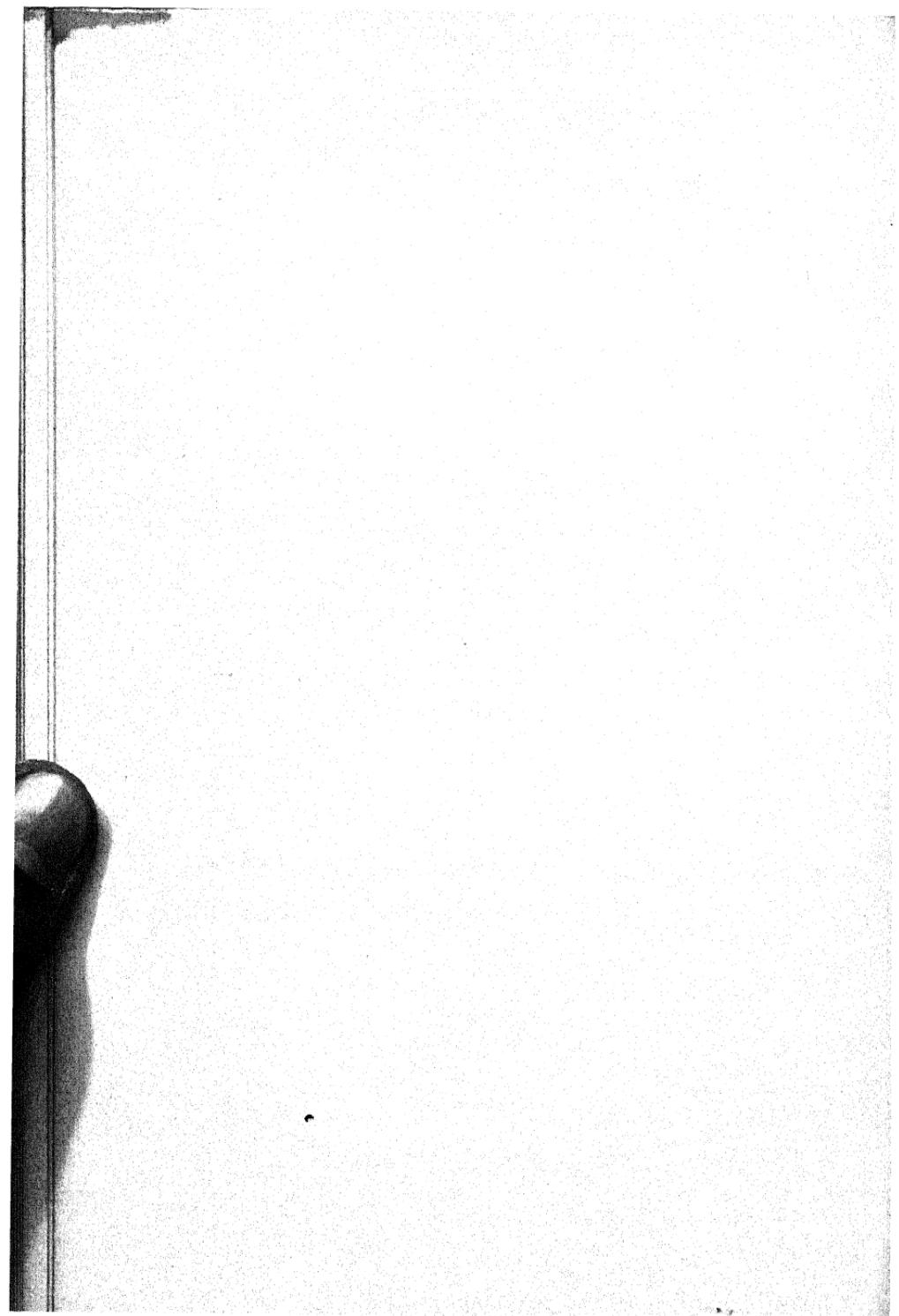
DREDE

And as he rounded thus in mine ear
Of false collusion confetteréd by assent,
Methought I see lewd fellows here and there
Come for to slay me of mortall intent.
And, as they came, the shipboard fast I hent,¹
And thought to leap, and even with that woke,
Caught pen and ink, and wrote this little book.

I would therewith no man were discontent,
Beseaching you that shall it see or read
In every point to be indifferent,
Sith all in substance of slumbering doth proceed.
I will not say it is mattér indeed,
But yet oftime such dreams be foundē true:
Now construe ye what is the residue!

Thus endeth the Bouge of Court.

¹seized.



Hereafter followeth the Book of

PHILIP SPARROW

Compiled by MASTER SKELTON, Poet Laureate

*Pla ce bo!*¹

Who is there, who?

*Di le xi!*²

Dame Margery.

Fa, re, my, my.

Wherefore and why, why?

For the soul of Philip Sparrow,

That was, late, slain at Carrow,³

Among the Nuns Black.⁴

For that sweet soul's sake,

And for all sparrows' souls

Set in our bead-rolls,

Pater noster qui,

With an *Ave Mari*,

And with the corner of a Creed;

The more shall be your meed!

When I remember again

How my Philip was slain,

Never half the pain

Was between you twain,

Pyramus and Thisbe,

As then befell to me:

¹The beginning of the Office for the Dead at Vespers: "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living" (Ps. cxvi. 9).

²Ps. cxiv. (Vulgata): "Praise ye [the Lord]."

³A nunnery in the suburbs of Norwich, where Joanna was being educated.

⁴Benedictines.

I wept and I wailed,
 The tearés down hailed,
 But nothing it availed
 To call Philip again,
 Whom Gib, our cat, hath slain.

Gib, I say, our cat
 Worrowéd¹ her on that
 Which I loved best.
 It cannot be exprest
 My sorrowful heaviness,
 But all without redress!
 For within that stound,²
 Half slumb'ring in a sound³
 I fell down to the ground.

Unneth⁴ I cast mine eyes
 Toward the cloudy skies !
 But when I did behold
 My sparrow dead and cold
 No creature but that wold
 Have ruéd upon me,
 To behold and see
 What heaviness did me pang:
 Wherewith my hands I wrang,
 That my sinews cracked,
 As though I had been racked,
 So pained and so strained
 That no life wellnigh remained.

I sighed and I sobbed,
 For that I was robbed
 Of my sparrow's life.
 O maiden, widow, and wife,
 Of what estate⁵ ye be,
 Of high or low degree,

¹Choked.

²moment.

³swoon.

⁴With difficulty.

⁵rank.

Great sorrow then ye might see,
 And learn to weep at me!
 Such pains did me fret
 That mine heart did beat,
 My visage pale and dead,
 Wan, and blue as lead!
 The pangs of hateful death
 Wellnigh had stopped my breath!

Heu, heu, me,¹
 That I am woe for thee!
Ad Dominum, cum tribularer, clamavi²:
 Of God nothing else crave I
 But Philip's soul to keep
 From the mareas deep
 Of Acheronte's well,
 That is a flood of hell;
 And from the great Pluto,
 The prince of endless woe;
 And from foul Alecto,
 With visage black and blo³;
 And from Medusa, that mare,⁴
 That like a fiend doth stare;
 And from Megæra's adders
 For ruffing of Philip's feathers,
 And from her fiery sparklings
 For burning of his wings;
 And from the smokes sour
 Of Proserpina's bower;
 And from the dens dark
 Where Cerebus doth bark,
 Whom Theseus did affray,
 Whom Hercules did outray,
 As famous poets say;
 From that hell-hound

¹Woe, woe is me. ²"In my distress, I cried unto the Lord."

³livid. ⁴hag.

PHILIP SPARROW

That lieth in chainēs bound,
 With ghastly headēs three;
 To Jupiter pray we
 That Philip preserved may be!
 Amen, say ye with me!

Do mi nus,
 Help now, sweet Jesus!
*Levavi oculos meos in montes.*¹
 Would God I had Zenophontes,
 Or Socrates the wise,
 To shew me their device
 Moderately to take
 This sorrow that I make
 For Philip Sparrow's sake!
 So fervently I shake,
 I feel my body quake!
 So urgently I am brought
 Into careful thought!
 Like Andromach, Hector's wife,
 Was weary of her life,
 When she had lost her joy,
 Noble Hector of Troy;
 In like manner also
 Increaseth my deadly woe,
 For my sparrow is go!

It was so pretty a fool,
 It would sit on a stool,
 And learned after my school
 For to keep his cut,²
 With "Philip, keep your cut!"

It had a velvet cap,
 And would sit upon my lap,
 And seek after small wormēs,

¹"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills" (Ps. cxxi. 1, Vulgate).
²keep his distance.

And sometime whitebread-crumbés;
 And, many times and oft,
 Between my breastés soft
 It woulde lie and rest;
 It was proper and prest¹!

Sometime he would gasp
 When he saw a wasp;
 A fly, or a gnat,
 He would fly at that;
 And prettily he would pant
 When he saw an ant!
 Lord, how he would pry
 After a butterfly!
 Lord, how he would hop
 After the gressop!
 And when I said, "Phip, Phip!"
 Then he would leap and skip,
 And take me by the lip.
 Alas, it will me slo
 That Philip is gone me fro!

*Si in i qui ta tes . . .*²
 Alas, I was evil at ease!
*De pro fun dis cla ma vi,*³
 When I saw my sparrow die!

Now, after my dome,⁴
 Dame Sulpicia at Rome,
 Whose name regist'red was
 For ever in tables of brass,
 Because she did pass
 In poesy to indite
 And eloquently to write,

¹pretty and neat.

²"If [thou shouldest mark] iniquities . . ." (Ps. cxxx. 3).

³"Out of the depths I cried [unto the Lord]" (Ps. cxxx.).

⁴opinion.

PHILIP SPARROW

Though she would pretend
My sparrow to command,
I trow, she could not amend
Reporting the virtues all
Of my sparrow royall.

For it would come and go,
And fly so to and fro;
And on me it would leap
When I was asleep
And his feathers shake,
Wherewith he would make
Me often for to wake,
And for to take him in
Upon my naked skin.
God wot, we thought no sin:
What though he crept so low?
It was no hurt, I trow,
He did nothing, perde,
But sit upon my knee!
Philip, though he were nice,¹
In him it was no vice!
Philip might be bold
And do what he wold:
Philip would seek and take
All the fleas black
That he could there espy
With his wanton eye.

O pe ra.²
La, soll, fa, fa,
*Confitebor tibi, Domine, in toto corde meo!*³
Alas, I would rise and go
A thousand mile of ground!

¹wanton, toyish.

²“The works [of the Lord are great]” (Ps. cxi. 2).

³“I will confess to the Lord with my whole heart” (Ps. cxi. 1).

If any such might be found
It were worth an hundred pound
Of King Croesus' gold,
Or of Attalus the old,
The riché prince of Pergame,
Whoso list the story to see.
Cadmus, that his sister sought,
An he should be bought
For gold and fee,
He should over the sea
To weet if he could bring
Any of the offspring,
Or any of the blood.
But whoso understood
Of Medea's art,
I would I had a part
Of her crafty magic!
My sparrow then should be quick,
With a charm or twain,
And play with me again!
But all this is in vain
Thus for to complain.

I took my sampler once
Of purpose, for the nonce,
To sew with stiches of silk
My sparrow white as milk,
That by representation
Of his image and fashion
To me it might import
Some pleasure and comfort,
For my solace and sport.
But when I was sewing his beak,
Methought my sparrow did speak,
And opened his pretty bill,
Saying, "Maid, ye are in will
Again me for to kill!
Ye prick me in the head!"

With that my needle waxéd red,
 Methought, of Philip's blood.
 Mine hair right upstood,
 I was in such a fray
 My speech was taken away.
 I cast down that there was,
 And said, "Alas, alas,
 How cometh this to pass?"
 My fingers, dead and cold,
 Could not my sampler hold:
 My needle and thread
 I threw away for dread.
 The best now that I may
 Is for his soul to pray:
*A porta inferi . . .*¹
 Good Lord, have mercy
 Upon my sparrow's soul,
 Written in my bead-roll!

*Au di vi vo cem,*²
 Japhet, Ham, and Shem,
Ma gni fi cat,
 Shew me the right path
 To the hills of Armony!
 Whereon the boards yet lie
 Of your father's boat,
 That was sometime afloat;
 And now they lie and rote;
 Let some poets write
 Deucalion's flood it hight.
 But as verily as ye be
 The natural sons three
 Of Noah the patriarch,
 That made that great ark,

¹"From 'the gate of hell'" – an antiphon in the Mass for the Dead.

²Another antiphon: "I heard a voice [from heaven say unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead]" (Rev. xiv. 13).

Wherein he had apes and owls,
Beasts, birds, and fowls,
That if ye can find
Any of my sparrow's kind
(God send the soul good rest!)
I would have yet a nest
As pretty and as prest
As my sparrow was.
But my sparrow did pass
All sparrows of the wood
That were since Noah's flood!
Was never none so good!
King Philip of Macedonia
Had no such Philip as I,
No, no, sir, hardly!

Vengeance I ask and cry,
By way of exclamation,
On all the whole nation
Of cattes wild and tame:
God send them sorrow and shamel
That cat specially
That slew so cruelly
My little pretty sparrow
That I brought up at Carrow!

O cat of churlish kind,¹
The fiend was in thy mind
When thou my bird untwined²!
I would thou hadst been blind!
The léopards savage,
The lions in their rage
Might catch thee in their paws,
And gnaw thee in their jaws!
The serpents of Libany
Might sting thee venomously!
The dragons with their tongues

¹nature.

²destroyed.

Might poison thy liver and lungs!
 The manticors¹ of the mountains
 Might feed them on thy brains!

Melanchætes, that hound
 That plucked Acteon to the ground,
 Gave him his mortal wound,
 Changed to a deer,
 The story doth appear,
 Was changéd to an hart:
 So (foul cat that thou art!)
 The selfsame hound
 Might thee confound
 That his own lord bote,
 Might bite asunder thy throat!

Of Inde the greedy grypes²
 Might tear out all thy tripes!
 Of Arcady the bears
 Might pluck away thine ears!
 The wild wolf Lycaon³
 Bite asunder thy back bone!
 Of Etna the burning hill,
 That day and night burneth still,
 Set in thy tail a blaze
 That all the world may gaze
 And wonder upon thee,
 From Ocean the great sea
 Unto the Isles of Orcady,⁴
 From Tilbury ferry
 To the plain of Salisbury!
 So traitorously my bird to kill
 That never owed thee evil will!

Was never bird in cage
 More gentle of corage⁵

human-headed dragons. ²griffins. ³cf. Ovid, *Met.* i. 163.

⁴i.e. the Orkneys.

⁵inclination.

In doing his homage
 Unto his sovereign.
 Alas, I say again,
 Death hath departed us twain!
 The false cat hath thee slain:
 Farewell, Philip, adew!
 Our Lord, thy soul rescue!
 Farewell, without restore,
 Farewell, for evermore!

An it were a Jew,
 It would make one rue,
 To see my sorrow new.
 These villainous false cats
 Were made for mice and rats,
 And not for birdes small.
 Alas, my face waxeth pale,
 Telling this piteous tale,
 How my bird so fair,
 That was wont to repair,
 And go in at my spair,¹
 And creep in at my gore²
 Of my gown before,
 Flickering with his wings!
 Alas, my heart it stings,
 Rememb'ring pretty things!
 Alas, mine heart it sleth
 My Philip's doleful death!
 When I remember it,
 How prettily it would sit,
 Many times and oft,
 Upon my finger aloft!
 I played with him tittle-tattle,
 And fed him with my spattle,²
 With his bill between my lips.
 It was my pretty Phips!

¹Openings in her clothes. ²spittle.

PHILIP SPARROW

Many a pretty kuss¹
 Had I of his sweet muss²!
 And now the cause is thus,
 That he is slain me fro,
 To my great pain and woe.

Of fortune this the chance
 Standeth on variánce:
 Oft time after pleasánce,
 Trouble and grievánce.
 No man can be sure
 Always to have pleasure:
 As well perceive ye may
 How my disport and play
 From me was taken away
 By Gib, our cat saváge,
 That in a furious rage
 Caught Philip by the head
 And slew him there stark dead!

Kyrie, eleison,
Christe, eleison,
*Kyrie, eleison!*³

For Philip Sparrow's soul,
 Set in our bead-roll,
 Let us now whisper
 A *Pater noster*.

*Lauda, anima mea, Dominum!*⁴
 To weep with me, look that ye come,
 All manner of birdés in your kind;
 See none be left behind.
 To mourning look that ye fall
 With dolorous songs funerall,
 Some to sing, and some to say,

¹kiss.

²bill.

³"Lord, have mercy," etc.

"Praise the Lord, O my soul!" (Ps. cxli. 1, Vulgate).

Some to weep, and some to pray,
 Every bird in his lay.
 The goldfinch, the wagtail;
 The jangling jay to rail,
 The fleckéd pie to chatter
 Of this dolorous matter;
 And robin redbreast,
 He shall be the priest
 The requiem mass to sing,
 Softly warbeling,
 With help of the reed sparrow,
 And the chattering swallow,
 This hearse for to hallow;
 The lark with his long toe;
 The spinke,¹ and the martinet also;
 The shoveller with his broad beak;
 The dotterel, that foolish peke,
 And also the mad coot,
 With bald face to toot;
 The fieldfare, and the snite²;
 The crow, and the kite;
 The raven, called Rolfè,
 His plain song to sol-fa;
 The partridge, the quail;
 The plover with us to wail;
 The woodhack,³ that singeth "chur"
 Hoarsely, as he had the mur⁴;
 The lusty chanting nightingale;
 The popinjay⁵ to tell her tale,
 That toteth⁶ oft in a glass,
 Shall read the Gospel at mass;
 The mavis⁷ with her whistle
 Shall read there the Epistle.
 But with a large and a long
 To keep just plain-song,

¹chaffinch. ²snipe. ³woodpecker. ⁴a cold.

⁵parrot. ⁶peeps. ⁷song-thrush.

PHILIP SPARROW

Our chanters shall be the cuckoo,
 The culver, the stockdoo,
 With "peewit" the lapwing,
 The Versicles shall sing.

The bittern with his bumpè,
 The crane with his trumpè,
 The swan of Mæander,
 The goose and the gander,
 The duck and the drake,
 Shall watch at this wake;
 The peacock so proud,
 Because his voice is loud,
 And hath a glorious tail,
 He shall sing the Grail¹;
 The owl, that is so foul,
 Must help us to howl;
 The heron so gaunt,
 And the cormorant,
 With the pheasant,
 And the gaggling gant,²
 And the churlish chough;
 The knot and the ruff;
 The barnacle,³ the buzzard,
 With the wild mallard;
 The divendop to sleep;
 The water-hen to weep;
 The puffin and the teal
 Money they shall deal
 To poorè folk at large,
 That shall be their charge;
 The seamew and the titmouse;
 The woodcock with the long nose;
 The throstle with her warbling;
 The starling with her brabbling;
 The rook, with the osprey

¹the *Graduale*. ²gannet. ³the barnacle-goose.

That putteth fishes to a fray;
And the dainty curlew,
With the turtle most true.

At this *Placebo*
We may not well forgo
The countering of the coe¹;
The stork also,
That maketh his nest
In chimneys to rest;
Within those walls
No broken galls
May there abide
Of cuckoldry side,
Or else philosophy
Maketh a great lie.

The ostrich, that will eat
An horseshoe so great,
In the stead of meat,
Such fervent heat
His stomach doth freat;
He cannot well fly,
Nor sing tunably,
Yet at a brayd²
He hath well assayed
To sol-fa above ela.
Fa, lorell, fa, fa!
Ne quando
*Male cantando,*³
The best that we can,
To make him our bell-man,
And let him ring the bells.
He can do nothing else.

Chanticleer, our cock,
Must tell what is of the clock

¹jackdaw.

²at a push.

³Lest ever by singing badly.

PHILIP SPARROW

By the astrology
 That he hath naturally
 Conceived and caught,
 And was never taught
 By Albumazer¹
 The astronomer,
 Nor by Ptolomy
 Prince of astronomy,²
 Nor yet by Haly;
 And yet he croweth daily
 And nightly the tides
 That no man abides,
 With Partlot his hen,
 Whom now and then
 He plucketh by the head
 When he doth her tread.

The bird of Araby,
 That potentially
 May never die,
 And yet there is none
 But one alone;
 A phoenix it is
 This hearse that must bliss
 With aromatic gums
 That cost great sums,
 The way of thurification
 To make a fumigation,
 Sweet of reflare,³
 And redolent of air,
 This corse for to 'sense
 With great reverence,
 As patriarch or pope
 In a black cope.
 Whilst he 'sensemeth the hearse,
 He shall sing the verse,

¹An Arabian of the ninth century. ²i.e. astrology. ³perfume.

*Liber a me,*¹
 In de la, sol, re,
 Softly bemole²
 For my sparrow's soul.
 Pliny sheweth all
 In his *Story Naturalis*³
 What he doth find
 Of the phoenix kind;
 Of whose incineration
 There riseth a new creation
 Of the same fashion
 Without alteration,
 Saving that old age
 Is turned into corage
 Of fresh youth again;
 This matter true and plain,
 Plain matter indeed,
 Who so list to read.

But for the eagle doth fly
 Highest in the sky,
 He shall be the sub-dean,
 The choir to demean,⁴
 As provost principal,
 To teach them their Ordinal;
 Also the noble falcon,
 With the ger-falcon,
 The tarsel gentill,
 They shall mourn soft and still
 In their amice of gray;
 The sacre⁵ with them shall say
*Dirige*⁶ for Philip's soul;
 The goshawk shall have a roll
 The choristers to control;

¹"Deliver me" — the opening of the Responsory.

²B molle, flat. ³See *Historio Naturalis*, lib. x., sec. 2.

⁴conduct. ⁵A hawk. ⁶"Direct [my steps]" — another antiphon.

PHILIP SPARROW

The lanners and the merlions¹
 Shall stand in their mourning-gowns;
 The hobby and the musket²
 The censers and the cross shall fet;
 The kestrel in all this wark
 Shall be holy water clerk.

And now the dark cloudy night
 Chaseth away Phœbus bright,
 Taking his course toward the west,
 God send my sparrow's soul good rest!
*Requiem aeternum dona eis, Domine!*³
 Fa, fa, fa, mi, re, re,
*A por ta in fe ri,*⁴
 Fa, fa, fa, mi, mi.

*Credo videre bona Domini,*⁵
 I pray God, Philip to heaven may fly!
*Domine, exaudi orationem meam!*⁶
 To heaven he shall, from heaven he came!
*Do mi nus vo bis cum!*⁷
 Of all good prayers God send him some!
*Oremus,*⁸
*Deus, cui proprium est misereri et parcere,*⁹
 On Philip's soul have pity!
 For he was a pretty cock,
 And came of a gentle stock,
 And wrapt in a maiden's smock,
 And cherished full daintily,
 Till cruel fate made him to die:
 Alas, for doleful destiny!

¹little hawks.

²the male sparrow-hawk.

³"Grant them eternal rest, O Lord!"

⁴"From the gate of hell."

⁵"I believe to see the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. xxvii. 13).

⁶"Lord, hear my prayer!" (Ps. cii.).

⁷"The Lord be with you!" ⁸"Let us pray."

⁹"O God, whose property it is to be merciful and to spare."

But whereto should I
Longer mourn or cry?
To Jupiter I call,
Of heaven imperiall,
That Philip may fly
Above the starry sky,
To tread the pretty wren,
That is our Lady's hen:
Amen, amen, amen!

Yet one thing is behind,
That now cometh to mind;
An epitaph I would have
For Philip's grave:
But for I am a maid,
Timorous, half afraid,
That never yet assayed
Of Heliconēs well,
Where the Muses dwell;
Though I can read and spell,
Recount, report, and tell
Of the *Tales of Canterbury*,
Some sad stories, some merry;
As Palamon and Arcet,
Duke Theseus, and Partlet;
And the Wife of Bath,
That worketh much scath;
When her tale is told
Among housewives bold,
How she controlled
Her husbands as she wold,
And them to despise
In the homeliest wise,
Bring other wives in thought
Their husbands to set at nought.
And though that read have I

¹trouble.

Of Gawain and Sir Guy,
 And tell can a great piece
 Of the *Golden Fleece*,
 How Jason it wan,
 Like a valiant man;
 Of Arthur's Round Table,
 With his knights commendable,
 And Dame Gaynor, his queen,
 Was somewhat wanton, I ween;
 How Sir Lancelot de Lake
 Many a spear brake
 For his lady's sake;
 Of Tristram, and King Mark,
 And all the whole wark
 Of Belle Isolde his wife,
 For whom was much strife;
 Some say she was light,
 And made her husband knight
 Of the common hall,
 That cuckolds men call;
 And of Sir Lybius,
 Named Dysconius¹;
 Of Quater Fylz Amund,²
 And how they were summoned
 To Rome, to Charlemagne,
 Upon a great pain,
 And how they rode each one
 On Bayard Mountalbon;
 Men see him now and then
 In the forest of Arden.
 What though I can frame
 The stories by name
 Of Judas Maccabeus,
 And of Cæsar Julius;
 • And of the love between

¹Le Beau Desconnu in Ritson's *Met. Rom.* ii.

²The Four Sons of Aymon (Caxton).

Paris and Vienne¹;
 And of the duke² Hannibal,
 That made the Romans all
 Fordread and to quake;
 How Scipion did wake
 The city of Carthage,
 Which by his unmerciful rage
 He beat down to the ground.
 And though I can expound
 Of Hector of Troy,³
 That was all their joy,
 Whom Achilles slew,
 Wherefore all Troy did rue;
 And of the love so hote
 That made Troilus to dote
 Upon fair Cresseid;
 And what they wrote and said,
 And of their wanton wills
 Pander bare the bills⁴
 From one to the other;
 His master's love to further,
 Sometime a precious thing,
 An ouch,⁵ or else a ring;
 From her to him again
 Sometime a pretty chain,
 Or a bracelet of her hair,
 Pray'd Troilus for to wear
 That token for her sake;
 How heartily he did it take,
 And much thereof did make;
 And all that was in vain,
 For she did but feign;
 The story telleth plain,
 He could not optain,
 Though his father were a king,

¹Printed by Caxton. ²leader. ³As in Lydgate's *Book of Troy*.

⁴i.e. *billetts-doux*. ⁵A jewel or brooch.

Yet there was a thing
 That made the male to wring¹;
 She made him to sing
 The song of lover's lay;
 Musing night and day,
 Mourning all alone,
 Comfort had he none,
 For she was quite gone.
 Thus in conclusion,
 She brought him in abusion;
 In earnest and in game
 She was much to blame;
 Disparaged is her fame,
 And blemished is her name,
 In manner half with shame;
 Troilus also hath lost
 On her much love and cost,
 And now must kiss the post;
 Pandarus, that went between,
 Hath won nothing, I ween,
 But light for summer green;
 Yet for a special laud
 He is named Troilus' bawd;
 Of that name he is sure
 Whiles the world shall 'dure.

Though I remember the fable
 Of Penelope most stable,
 To her husband most true,
 Yet long-time she ne knew
 Whether he were live or dead;
 Her wit stood her in stead,
 That she was true and just
 For any bodily lust
 To Ulysses her make,²
 And never would him forsake:

¹i.e. wrung his withers.

²mate.

Of Marcus Marcellus¹
 A process I could tell us;
 And of Antiochus;
 And of Josephus
De Antiquitatibus;
 And of Mardocheus,²
 And of great Ahasuerus,
 And of Vesca his queen,
 Whom he forsook with teen,
 And of Esther his other wife,
 With whom he led a pleasant life;
 Of King Alexander;
 And of King Evander;
 And of Porsenna the great,
 That made the Romans to sweat:

Though I have enroll'd
 A thousand new and old
 Of these historious tales,
 To fill budgets and males³
 With books that I have read,
 Yet I am nothing sped,⁴
 And can but little skill
 Of Ovid or Virgil,
 Or of Plutarch,
 Or Francis Petrarch,
 Alcæus or Sappho,
 Or such others poets mo,
 As Linus and Homerus,
 Euphorion and Theocritus,
 Anacreon and Arion,
 Sophocles and Philemon,
 Pindarus and Dimonides,
 Philistion and Pherecydes;

¹M. Claudius Marcellus, conqueror of Syracuse in the Second Punic War, and slain by Hannibal.

²Mordecai.

³bags.

⁴versed.

These poets of ancientē,
They are too diffuse¹ for me:

For, as I tofore have said,
I am but a young maid,
And cannot in effect
My style as yet direct
With English words elect.
Our natural tongue is rude,
And hard to be ennewed
With polished termēs lusty;
Our language is so rusty,
So cankered, and so full
Of frowards, and so dull,
That if I would apply
To write ornately,
I wot not where to find
Terms to serve my mind.

Gower's English is old,
And of no value told;
His matter is worth gold,
And worthy to be enroll'd.

In Chaucer I am sped,
His *Tales* I have read:
His matter is delectable,
Solacious,² and commendable;
His English well allowed,
So as it is emprowed,
For as it is employed,
There is no English void,
At those days much commended.³
And now men would have amended
His English, whereat they bark,
And mar all they wark.
Chaucer, that famous clerk,

¹difficult.

²pleasant.

³text seems corrupt here.

His terms were not dark,
But pleasant, easy, and plain;
No word he wrote in vain.

Also John Lydgate
Writeth after an higher rate;
It is diffuse to find
The sentence of his mind,
Yet writeth he in his kind,
No man that can amend
Those matters that he hath penned;
Yet some men find a fault,
And say he writeth too haut.

Wherefore hold me excused
If I have not well perused
Mine English half abused;
Though it be refused,
In worth I shall it take,
And fewer wordēs make.

But, for my sparrow's sake,
Yet as a woman may,
My wit I shall assay
An epitaph to write
In Latin plain and light,
Wherof the elegy
Followeth by and by:
Flos volucrum formose, vale!
Philippe, sub isto
Marmore jam recubas,
Qui mihi carus eras.
Semper erunt nitido
Radiantia sidera coelo;
Impressusque meo
*Pectore semper eris.*¹

¹Lovely flower of a bird, farewell! Philip, beneath that marble now you lie, you who were dear to me. Ever in the bright sky will there be shining stars; and ever will you be engraven on my heart.

*Per me laurigerum
 Britonum Skeltonida Vatem
 Haec cecinisse licet
 Ficta sub imagine texta.
 Cujus eris volucris,
 Praestanti corpore virgo:
 Candida Nais erat,
 Formosior ista Joanna est;
 Docta Corinna fuit,
 Sed magis ista sapit.¹*

Bien men souient.²

THE COMMENDATIONS

*Beati im ma cu la ti in via,³
 O gloriosa foemina!⁴*
 Now mine whole imagination
 And studious meditation
 Is to take this commendation
 In this consideration;
 And under patient toleration
 Of that most goodly maid
 That *Placebo* hath said,
 And for her sparrow prayed
 In lamentable wise,
 Now will I enterprise,
 Through the grace divine
 Of the Muses nine,
 Her beauty to commend,
 If Arethusa will send

¹Through me, Skelton, Poet of Britain, may this be sung under an assumed character, whose [i.e. my] bird thou shalt be; maiden of lovely form. Beautiful was Nais, lovelier is this Joanna, Corinna was learned, but she is wiser.

²I remember it well.

³“Blessed are the undefiled in the way” (Ps. cxix. 1).

⁴O glorious woman!

Me influence to indite,
And with my pen to write;
If Apollo will promise
Melodiously to it devise
His tunable harp strings
With harmony that sings
Of princes and of kings
And of all pleasant things,
Of lust and of delight,
Thorough his godly might;
To whom be the laud ascribed
That my pen hath enbibed
With the aureate droppes,
As verily my hope is,
Of Tagus, that golden flood,
That passeth all earthly good;
And as that flood doth pass
All floods that ever was
With his golden sands,
Who so that understands
Cosmography, and the streams
And the floods in strange reams,
Right so she doth excede
All other of whom we read,
Whose fame by me shall spread
Into Persia and Mede,¹
From Britons' Albion
To the Tower of Babylon.

I trust it is no shame,
And no man will me blame,
Though I register her name
In the court of Fame;
For this most goodly flower,
This blossom of fresh colour,
So Jupiter me succour,

¹Media.

She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
*Hac claritate gemina,*¹
O gloria foemina,
*Retribue servo tuo, vivifica me!*²
*Labia mea laudabunt te.*³

But enforced am I
 Openly to ascry,
 And to make an outcry
 Against odious Envy,
 That evermore will lie,
 And say cursedly;
 With his leathern eye,
 And cheekes dry;
 With visage wan,
 As swart as tan;
 His bones crake,
 Lean as a rake;
 His gummēs rusty
 Are full unlusty⁴;
 His heart withall
 Bitter as gall;
 His liver, his lung
 With anger is wrung;
 His serpent's tongue
 That many one hath stung;
 He frowneth ever;
 He laugheth never,
 Even nor morrow,
 But other men's sorrow
 Causeth him to grin
 And rejoice therein;
 No sleep can him catch,
 But ever doth watch,

¹With this twin brightness.

²"Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live."

³"My lips shall praise thee" (Ps. lxiii. 3). "unpleasant."

He is so bete¹
 With malice, and frete²
 With anger and ire,
 His foul desire
 Will suffer no sleep
 In his head to creep;
 His foul semblant
 All unpleasant;
 When others are glad,
 Then is he sad;
 Frantic and mad,
 His tongue never still
 For to say ill,
 Writhing and wringing,
 Biting and stinging;
 And thus this elf
 Consumeth himself,
 Himself doth slo
 With pain and woe!
 This false Envy
 Sayeth that I
 Use great folly
 For to indite,
 And for to write,
 And spend my time
 In prose and rime,
 For to express
 The nobleness
 Of my mistress,
 That causeth me
 Studious to be
 To make a relation
 Of her commendation.
 And there again
 Envy doth complain,
 And hath disdain;

¹inflamed.²gnawed.

But yet certain
I will be plain,
And my style 'dress
To this process.

Now Phœbus me ken
To sharp my pen,
And lead my fist
As him best list,
That I may say
Honour alway
Of womankind!
Truth doth me bind
And loyalty
Ever to be
Their true bedell,¹
To write and tell
How women excel
In nobleness;
As my mistress,
Of whom I think
With pen and ink
For to compile
Some goodly style;
For this most goodly flower,
This blossom of fresh colour,
So Jupiter me succour,
She flourisheth new and new
In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina,
Legem pone mihi, domina, in viam justificationum
*tuarum!*²
*Quemadmodum desiderat cervus ad fontes aquarum.*³

¹servitor, beadsman.

²"Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes!"

³"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks" (Ps. xlii.).

How shall I report
 All the goodly sort
 Of her features clear,
 That hath none earthly peer?
 The favour of her face
 Ennewed all with grace,
 Comfort, pleasure, and solace.
 Mine heart doth so embrace,
 And so hath ravished me
 Her to behold and see,
 That in wordes plain
 I cannot me refrain
 To look on her again:
 Alas, what should I feign?
 It were a pleasant pain
 With her aye to remain.

Her eyen gray and steep
 Causeth mine heart to leap;
 With her brows bent
 She may well represent
 Fair Lucres, as I ween,
 Or else fair Polexene,
 Or else Calliope,
 Or else Penelope:
 For this most goodly flower,
 This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloria foemina,
*Memor esto verbi tui servuo tuo!*¹
*Servus tuus sum ego.*²

¹“Remember thy word unto thy servant!” (Ps. cxix. 49).

²“I am thy servant” (Ps. cxix. 125).

The Indy sapphire blue
 Her veins doth ennew;
 The orient pearl so clear,
 The whiteness of her leer¹;
 Her lusty ruby ruddies²
 Resemble the rose buddés;
 Her lips soft and merry
 Enblooméd like the cherry:
 It were an heavenly bliss
 Her sugar'd mouth to kiss.

Her beauty to augment,
 Dame Nature hath her lent
 A wart³ upon her cheek, —
 Who so list to seek
 In her visage a scar, —
 That seemeth from afar
 Like to the radiant star,
 All with favour fret,
 So properly it is set!
 She is the violet,
 The daisy delectable,
 The columbine commendable,
 The jelofer amiable:
 For this most goodly flower,
 This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina,
*Bonitatem fecisti cum servo tuo, domina,*⁴
*Et ex praecordiis sonant paeonia!*⁵

¹complexion.

²blushes.

³mole (probably).

⁴“Thou hast dealt bountifully with thy servant, Lord” (Ps. cxix.).

⁵“And from the heart sound praises!”

And when I perceived
 Her wart and conceived,
 It cannot be denay'd
 But it was well conveyed
 And set so womanly,
 And nothing wantonly,
 But right conveniently,
 And full congruently,
 As Nature could devise,
 In most goodly wise!
 Who so list behold,
 It maketh lovers bold
 To her to sue for grace,
 Her favour to purchase;
 The scar upon her chin,
 Enhached on her fair skin,
 Whiter than the swan,
 It would make any man
 To forget deadly sin
 Her favour to win!
 For this most goodly flower,
 This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourishest new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina,
*Defecit in salutatione tua anima mea;*¹
*Quid petis filio, mater dulcissima?*²

Soft, and make no din,
 For now I will begin
 To have in remembrance
 Her goodly dalliance,
 And her goodly pastance³:

¹“My soul fainteth after thy salvation” (Ps. cxix. 81).
²“What seek you for your son, sweetest mother?” “pastime.”

So sad and so demure,
 Behaving her so sure,
 With words of pleasure
 She would make to the lure¹
 And any man convert
 To give her his whole heart.
 She made me sore amazed
 Upon her when I gazed,
 Methought mine heart was crazed,
 My eyen were so dazed!
 For this most goodly flower,
 This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina,
*Quomodo dilexi legem tuam, domina!*²
*Recedant vetera, nova sunt omnia.*³

And to amend her tale,⁴
 When she list to avail,⁵
 And with her fingers smale,
 And hands soft as silk
 Whiter than the milk,
 That are so quickly veined,
 Wherewith my hand she stained,
 Lord, how I was pained!
 Unneth I me refrained!
 How she me had reclaimed,
 And me to her retained,
 Embracing therewithall
 Her goodly middle small

¹attract – a metaphor from falconry.

²“O how I love thy law, O Lord!” (Ps. cxix. 97).

³“Old things are passed away, all things are new” (2 Cor. v. 17).

⁴to make up her list of perfections. ⁵i.e. avail herself.

With sides long and strait!
 To tell you what conceit
 I had then in a trice,
 The matter were too nice¹ —
 And yet there was no vice,
 Nor yet no villany,
 But only fantasy!
 For this most goodly flower,
 This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina,
*Iniquos odio habui!*²
*Non calumnientur me superbi.*³

But whereto should I note
 How often did I toot
 Upon her pretty foot?
 It rased⁴ mine heart-root
 To see her tread the ground
 With heelés short and round!
 She is plainly express
 Egeria, the goddess,
 And like to her image,
 Emporturéd with corage,
 A lovers' pilgrimage;
 There is no beast savage,
 Ne no tiger so wood,⁵
 But she would change his mood,
 Such reluent grace
 Is forméd in her face!
 For this most goodly flower,

¹delicate.²"I hate vain thoughts!" (Ps. cxix. 113).³"Let not the proud oppress me" (Ps. cxix. 122).⁴bruised.⁵mad.

This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina,
*Mirabilia testimonia tua!*¹
*Sicut novellae plantationes in juventute sua.*²

So goodly as she dresses,
 So properly she presses
 The bright golden tresses
 Of her hair so fine,
 Like Phœbus' beamēs shine!
 Whereto should I disclose
 The gartering of her hose?
 It is for to suppose
 How that she can wear
 Gorgeously her gear;
 Her fresh³ habiliments
 With other implements
 To serve for all intents,
 Like Dame Flora, queen
 Of lusty summer green:
 For this most goodly flower,
 This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina,
*Clamavi in toto corde, exudi me!*⁴
*Misericordia tua magna est super me.*⁵

¹“Wonderful are thy testimonies!” (Ps. cxix. 129).

²“That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth” (Ps. cxliv. 12). ^{elegant.}

³“I have cried with my whole heart, hear me!” (Ps. cxix. 145).

⁴“Great is thy mercy towards me” (Ps. lxxxvi. 13).

Her kirtle so goodly laced,
 And under that is braced¹
 Such pleasures that I may
 Neither write nor say!
 Yet though I write with ink,
 No man can let me think,
 For thought hath liberty,
 Thought is frank and free;
 To think a merry thought
 It cost me little nor nought.
 Would God mine homely style
 Were polished with the file
 Of Cicero's eloquence,
 To praise her excellence!
 For this most goodly flower,
 This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina,
*Principes persecuti sunt me gratis!*²
Omnibus consideratis,
Paradisus voluptatis
*Haec virgo est dulcissima.*³

My pen it is unable,
 My hand it is unstable,
 My reason rude and dull
 To praise her at the full;
 Goodly Mistress Jane,
 Sober, demure Diane;
 Jane this mistress hight,

¹ready.²"Princes have persecuted me without cause" (Ps. cxix. 161).³With all things considered, of heavenly pleasures this girl is the sweetest.

The lode-star of delight,
 Dame Venus of all pleasure,
 The well of worldly treasure!
 She doth exceed and pass
 In prudence Dame Pallas;
 For this most goodly flower,
 This blossom of fresh colour,
 So Jupiter me succour,
 She flourisheth new and new
 In beauty and virtue:
Hac claritate gemina,
O gloriosa foemina!

*Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine!*¹
 With this psalm, *Domine, probasti me,*²
 Shall sail over the sea,
 With *Tibi, Domine, commendamus,*³
 On pilgrimage to Saint James,⁴
 For shrimps, and for pranes,⁵
 And for stalking cranes!
 And where my pen hath offended,
 I pray you it may be amended
 By discreet consideration
 Of your wise reformation.
 I have not offended, I trust,
 If it be sadly discust.
 It were no gentle guise
 This treatise to despise
 Because I have written and said
 Honour of this fair maid.
 Wherefore should I be blamed,
 That I Jane have named,
 And famously proclaimed?

• “Give them eternal rest, O Lord.”

“O Lord, thou hast searched me.”

“We commend ourselves to thee, O Lord.”

¹i.e. of Compostella. ⁵prawns.

She is worthy to be enrolled
With letters of gold.

Car elle vault.¹

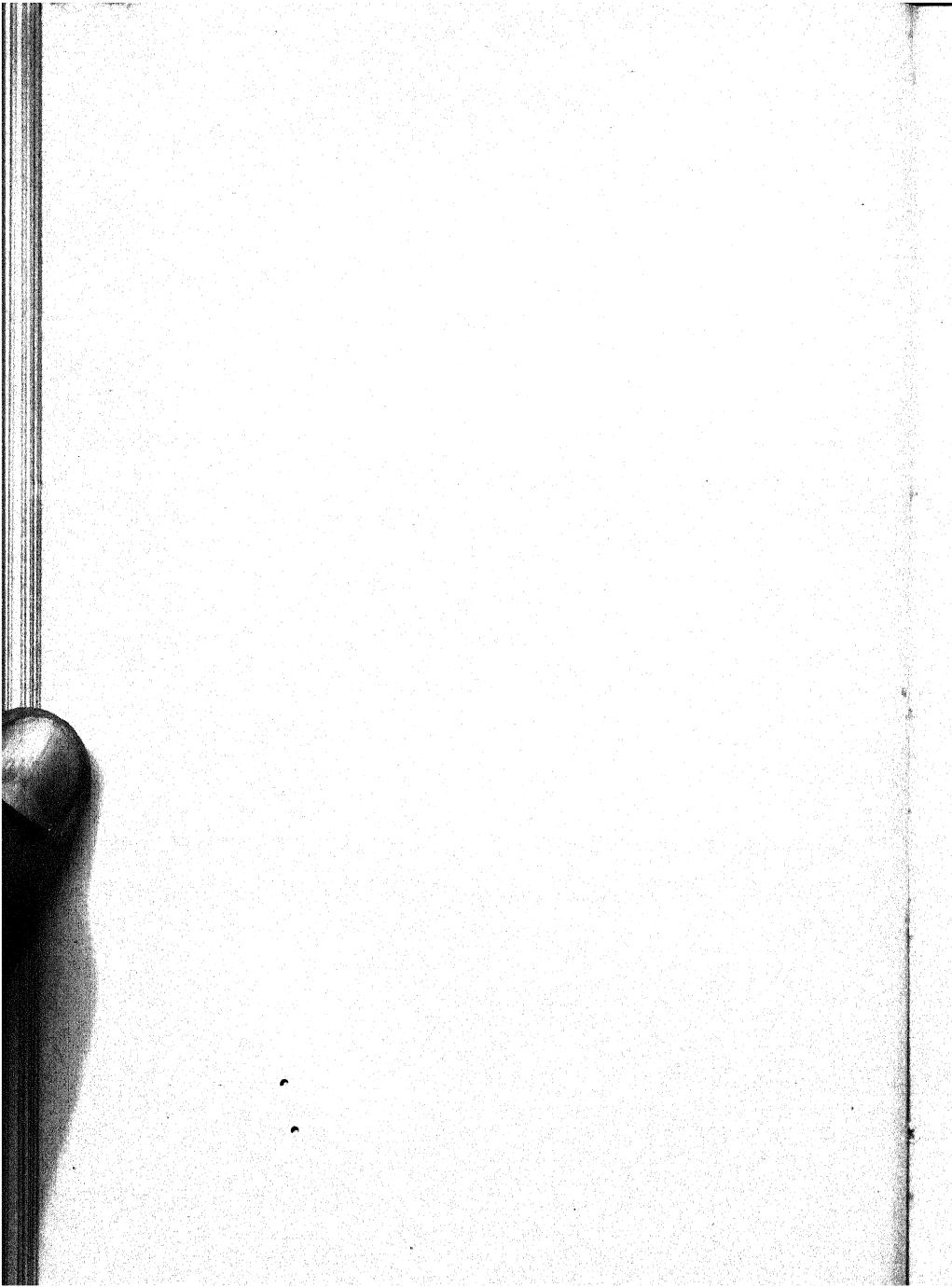
*Per me laurigerum Britonum Skeltonida vatem
Laudibus eximiis merito haec redimita puella est.
Formosam cecini, qua non formosior ulla est;
Formosam potius quam commendaret Homerus.
Sic juvat interdum rigidos recreare labores,
Nec minus hoc titulo tersa Minerva mea est.²*

Rien que playsere.

Thus endeth the Book of Philip Sparrow.

¹For she is worthy.

²The general sense of the above I take to be as follows: "Through me, Skelton, Laureate of Britain, this girl is deservedly honoured with praise. Lovely I called her, than whom none is more lovely; none so fair that Homer would rather praise. So it delights me, from time to time, to renew stern toil [P], nor is my art less pure than this title."



*Hereafter followeth the Book called
ELINOR RUMMING*

The Tunning of Elinor Rumming, by Skelton Laureate

Tell you I chill,¹
If that ye will
A while be still,
Of a comely Jill
That dwelt on a hill:
But she is not gryl,²
For she is somewhat sage
And well worn in age:
For her visage
It would assuage
A man's courage.

Her loathly lere³
Is nothing clear,
But ugly of cheer,
Droopy and drowsy,
Scurvy and lowsy,
Her face all bowsy,
Comely crinkléd,
Woundrously wrinkléd,
Like a roast pig's ear,
Bristléd with hair.

Her lewd lips twain,
They slaver, men sayne,
Like a ropy rain,
A gummy glaire.⁴
She is ugly fair:
Her nose somedele hookéd,
And camously crooked,⁵
Never stopping,
But ever dropping;

¹i.e. Ich will. ²fierce. ³skin. ⁴viscous matter. ⁵i.e. snub-nosed.

Her skin, loose and slack,
Grainéd like a sack;
With a crooked back.

Her eyen gowndy¹
Are full unsowndy,
For they are bleared;
And she gray haired,
Jawed like a jetty;
A man would have pitty
To see how she is gumméd,
Fingered and thumbéd,
Gently jointed,
Greased and annointed
Up to the knuckles;
The bones of her huckles²
Like as they were with buckels
Together made fast.
Her youth is far past!
Footed like a plane,
Leggéd like a crane,
And yet she will jet
Like a jollivet,³
In her furréd focket,⁴
And gray russet rocket,⁵
With simper and cocket.⁶
Her hood of Lincoln green
It has been hers, I ween,
More than forty year;
And so doth it appear,
For the green bare threadés
Look like sere weedés,
Witheréd like hay,
The wool worn away.
And yet, I dare say,
She thinketh herself gay

¹full of matter.

²hips.

³gay young thing.

⁴cloak with sleeves.

⁵jumper or dress.

⁶coquetry.

Upon the holy day
 When she doth her array
 And girdeth in her geets¹
 Stitched and pranked² with pleats;
 Her kirtle, Bristol-red,
 With clothes upon her head
 That weigh a sow of lead,
 Writhen in wondrous wise
 After the Saracen's guise,³
 With a whim-wham⁴
 Knit with a trim-tram
 Upon her brain-pan;
 Like an Egyptian⁵
 Cappéd about.

When she goeth out
 Herself for to shew,
 She driveth down the dew
 With a pair of heelēs
 As broad as two wheelēs;
 She hobbles as a gose⁶
 With her blanket hose,
 Her shoon smeared with tallow,
 Greaséd upon dirt
 That bawdeth⁷ her skirt.

FIT THE FIRST

And this comely dame,
 I understand, her name
 Is Elinor Rumming,
 At home in her wonning⁸;
 And as men say
 She dwelt in Surrey,
 In a certain stead⁹
 Beside Leatherhead.

¹clothes. ²decked. ³fashion. ⁴trinket. • ⁵gipsy.
⁶goose. ⁷befouls. ⁸dwelling. ⁹place.

ELINOR RUMMING

She is a tonnish gib,¹
The devil and she be sib.²

But to make up my tale,
She breweth nappy ale,
And maketh thereof pot-sale
To travellers, to tinkers,
To sweaters, to swinkers,
And all good ale-drinkers,
That will nothing spare
But drink till they stare
And bring themselves bare,
With "*Now away the mare!*"
And let us slay care."
As wise as an hare!

Come who so will
To Elinor on the hill
With "Fill the cup, fill!"
And sit there by still,
Early and late.
Thither cometh Kate,
Cisly, and Sare,
With their legs bare,
And also their feet
Hardely³ full unsweet;
With their heelés daggéd,⁴
Their kirtles all to-jaggéd,
Their smockés all to-ragged,
With titters and tatters,
Bring dishes and platters,
With all their might running
To Elinor Rumming
To have of her tunning:
She lendeth them on the same,
And thus beginneth the game.

¹a beery old cat.

²akin.

³Assuredly.

⁴bemired.

Some wenches come unlacéd,
 Some housewives come unbracéd,
 With their naked paps,
 That flips and flaps:
 It wigs and it wags
 Like tawny saffron bags,
 A sort of foul drabs
 All scurvy with scabs:
 Some be flybitten,
 Some skewed as a kitten;
 Some with a shoe-clout
 Bind their heads about;
 Some have no hair-lace,
 Their locks about their face,
 Their tresses untrussed
 All full of unlust¹;
 Some look strawry,
 Some cawry-mawry:
 Full untidy tegs,
 Like rotten eggs.
 Such a lewd sort
 To Elinor resort
 From tide to tide.
 Abide, abide!
 And to you shall be told
 How her ale is sold
 To Maud and to Mold.²

FIT THE SECOND

Some have no money
 That thither comè
 For their ale to pay.
 That is a shrewd aray³!
 Elinor sweared, "Nay,
 Ye shall not bear away

¹unsavouriness²Molly (perhaps).³a bad case.

Mine ale for nought,
 By Him that me bought!"
 With "Hey, dog, hey!
 Have these hogs away!"
 With "Get me a staffé,
 The swine eat my drafte¹!
 Strike the hogs with a club,
 They have drunk up my swilling-tub!"
 For, be there never so much press,
 These swine go to the high dais,
 The sow with her pigs,
 The boar his tail wrigs,
 His rump also he frigs²
 Against the high bench!
 With, "Fo, there's a stench!
 Gather up, thou wench;
 Seest thou not what is fall?³
 Take up dirt and all,
 And bear out of the hall:
 God give it ill preving,⁴
 Cleanly as evil 'chieving!"

But let us turn plain,
 Where we left again.
 For as ill a patch as that
 The hens run in the mashvat;
 For they go to roost
 Straight over the ale-joust,⁵
 And dung, when it comes,
 In the ale tuns.⁶
 Then Elinor taketh
 The mash-bowl, and shaketh
 The hens' dung away,
 And skimmeth it into a tray
 Whereas the yeast is,

¹hog-wash.²a bad end.³scratches.⁴joist.⁵befallen.⁶tumbles.

With her mangy fistēs:
 And sometime she blens¹
 The dung of her hens
 And the ale together,
 And sayeth "Gossip, come hither,
 This ale shall be thicker,
 And flower the more quicker;
 For I may tell you
 I learned it of a Jew
 When I began to brew,
 And I have found it true.
 Drink now while it is new:
 An ye may it brook,
 It shall make you look
 Younger than ye be
 Yearēs two or three,
 For ye may prove it by me.
 Behold," she said, "and see
 How bright I am of ble¹!
 I am not cast away,
 That can my husband say;
 When we kiss and play
 In lust and in liking
 He calleth me his whiting,
 His mulling and his miting,
 His nobbēs and his coney,
 His sweeting and his honey,
 With 'Bass,³ my pretty bonny,
 Thou art worth goods and money!"
 Thus make I my fellow fony,⁴
 Till that he dream and dronny⁵:
 For, after all our sport,
 Then will he rout⁶ and snort:
 Then sweetly together we lie
 As two piggēs in a sty."
 •

¹blends.²complexion.³Kiss me.⁴amorous.⁵drone.⁶snore.

To cease meseemeth best,
 And of this tale to rest,
 And for to leave this letter
 Because it is no better,
 And because it is no sweeter;
 We will no further rime
 Of it at this time,
 But we will turnē plain
 Where we left again.

FIT THE THIRD

Instead of coin and money
 Some bring her a coney,
 And some a pot with honey,
 Some salt, and some a spoon,
 Some their hose, and some their shoon;
 Some run a good trot
 With a skillet or a pot;
 Some fill their pot full
 Of good Lemster wool:
 An housewife of trust,
 When she is a-thirst,
 Such a web can spin,
 Her thrift is full thin.

Some go straight thither,
 Be it slaty¹ or slither:
 They hold the highway,
 They care not what men say,
 Be that as be may.
 Some, loth to be espied,
 Start in at the back-side
 Over the hedge and pale,
 And all for the good ale.

¹miry.

Some run till they sweat,
 Bring with them malt or wheat,
 And Dame Elinor entreat
 To birl¹ them of the best.

Then cometh another guest:
 She sweared by the rood of rest
 Her lippés are so dry
 Without drink she must die,
 "Therefore fill it by and by,
 And have here a peck of rye!"

Anon cometh another,
 As dry as the other,
 And with her doth bring
 Meal, salt, or other thing,
 Her harvest girdle, her wedding-ring,
 To pay for her scot
 As cometh to her lot.
 One bringeth her husband's hood
 Because the ale is good;
 Another brought her his cap
 To offer to the ale-tap,
 With flax and with tow;
 And some brought sour dough
 With "Hey" and with "Ho!
 Sit we down a row,
 And drink till we blow,
 And pipe 'Tirly Tirlow!'"

Some laid to pledge
 Their hatchet and their wedge,
 Their hekell² and their reel,
 Their rock,³ their spinning-wheel;
 And some went so narrow
 They laid to pledge their wharrow,

¹pour them out.

²flax-comb.

³distaff.

Their ribskin¹ and their spindle,
 Their needle and their thimble:
 Here was scant thrift
 When they made such a shift.

Their thirst was so great
 They asked never for meat,
 But drink, still drink,
 And "Let the cat wink,
 Let us wash our gummès
 From the dry crummès!"

FIT THE FOURTH

Some for very need
 Laid down a skein of thread,
 And some a skein of yarn;
 Some brought from the barn
 Both beans and peas,
 Small chaffer doth ease
 Sometime, now and than;
 Another there was that ran
 With a good brass-pan,
 Her colour was full wan;
 She ran in all haste,
 Unbraced and unlaced,
 Tawny, swart, and sallow
 Like a cake of tallow:
 I swear by all hallow²
 It was a stale³ to take
 The devil in a brake⁴!

And then came halting Joan,
 And brought a gambone⁵
 Of bacon that was reasty:
 But, Lord, as she was testy,

¹leather apron (?). ²all saints. ³lure. ⁴trap. ⁵gammon.

Angry as a waspy!
 She began to gape and gaspy,
 And bade Elinor go bet¹
 And fill in good met²;

Another brought a spick
 Of a bacon flick,³
 Her tongue was very quick
 But she spake somewhat thick:
 Her fellow did stammer and stut,
 But she was a foul slut,
 For her mouth foamed
 And her belly groaned:
 Joan said she had eaten a fiest.⁴
 "By Christ," said she, "thou liest,
 I have as sweet a breath
 As thou, with shameful death!"⁵

Then Elinor said, "Ye calettes,⁶
 I shall break your palettes,⁷
 Without ye now cease!"
 And so was made the peace.

Then thither came drunken Alice,
 And she was full of talés,
 Of tidings in Walés,
 And of Saint James in Galés,⁸
 And of the Portingalés,⁹
 With "Lo, gossip, ywis,
 Thus and thus it is:
 There hath been great war
 Between Temple Bar
 And the Cross in Cheap,
 And there came an heap
 Of mill-stones in a rout . . ."
 She speaketh thus in her snout,

¹hurry up. ²measure. ³fitch. ⁴fast.

⁵jades. ⁶pates. ⁷Galicia. ⁸Portuguese.

Snivelling in her nose
 As though she had the pose.¹
 "Lo, here is an old tippet,²
 An ye will give me a sippet
 Of your stale ale,
 God send you good sale!"
 And as she was drinking
 She fell in a winking
 With a barlichood,³
 She pissed where she stood.
 Then began she to weep,
 And forthwith fell asleep.
 Elinor took her up
 And blessed her with a cup
 Of new ale in corns⁴:
 Alice found therein no thorns,
 But supped it up at ones,⁵
 She found therein no bones

FIT THE FIFTH

Now in cometh another rabble:
 First one with a ladle,
 Another with a cradle,
 And with a side-saddle:
 And there began a fabble,⁶
 A clattering and babble
 Of foolish Philly,⁷
 That had a foal with Willy,
 With "Jayst you!" and "Gup gilly!⁸!"
 She could not lie stilly.

Then came in a jennet⁹
 And swore, "By Saint Bennet,

¹catarrh.²hood.³a drunken rage.⁴Simply, new ale.⁵once.⁶jabbering.⁷Phillis.⁸young mare.⁹little horse.

I drank not this sennet¹
 A draught to my pay²!
 Elinor, I thee pray
 Of thine ale let us essay,
 And have here a pilch of gray³:
 I wear skins of coney,⁴
 That causeth I look so donny⁵!"

Another then did hitch her,
 And brought a pottle-pitcher,⁶
 A tonnel, and a bottle,
 But she had lost the stopple:
 She cut off her shoe-sole,
 And stoppéd therewith the hole.

Among all the blimmer⁷
 Another brought a skimmer,
 A frying-pan, and a slicer:
 Elinor made the price
 For good ale each wit.

Then start in mad Kit
 That had little wit:
 She seeméd somedele sick
 And brought a penny chick
 To Dame Elinor
 For a draught of liquor.

Then Margery Milkduck
 Her kirtle she did uptuck
 An inch above her knee
 Her legs that ye might see;
 But they were sturdy and stubbéd,⁸
 Mighty pestles and clubbéd,

¹week.²satisfaction.³skin-cloak.

• "rabbit.

⁵poorly.⁶a two-quart pitcher.⁷din.⁸stumpy.

ELINOR RUMMING

As fair and as white
 As the foot of a kite:
 She was somewhat foul,
 Crooked-necked like an owl;
 And yet she brought her fees,
 A cantel of Essex cheese,
 Was well a foot thick
 Full of maggots quick:
 It was huge and great,
 And mighty strong meat
 For the devil to eat:
 It was tart and punget!¹

Another set of sluts:
 Some brought walnuts,
 Some apples, some pears,
 Some brought their clipping shears,
 Some brought this and that,
 Some brought I wot n'ere what;
 Some brought their husband's hat,
 Some puddings and links,
 Some tripes that stinks.

But of all this throng
 One came them among,
 She seemed half a leech,
 And began to preach
 Of the Tuesday in the week
 When the mare doth kick,
 Of the virtue of an unset leek,
 Of her husband's breek;
 With the feathers of a quail
 She could to Bordeaux sail;
 And with good ale barmé
 She could make a charmé
 To help withal a stitch:
 She seemed to be a witch.

¹pungent.

Another brought two goslings
 That were noughty froslings¹;
 She brought them in a wallet,
 She was a comely callet²:
 The goslings were untied,
 Elinor began to chide,
 "They be wretchocks³ thou hast brought,
 They are sheer shaking nought!"

FIT THE SIXTH

Maude Ruggy thither skipped:
 She was ugly hipped,
 And ugly thick lipped,
 Like an onion sided,
 Like tan leather hided:
 She had her so guided
 Between the cup and the wall
 That she was there withall
 Into a palsy fall:
 With that her head shakéd,
 And her handés quakéd,
 One's head would have askéd
 To see her naked.
 She drank so of the dregs,
 The dropsy was in her legs;
 Her face glist'ring like glass,
 All foggy fat she was:
 She had also the gout
 In all her joints about;
 Her breath was sour and stale,
 And smelléd all of ale:
 Such a bedfellow
 Would make one cast his craw⁴!

¹worthless frost-bitten things.²jade.³the smallest of the brood.⁴vomit.

ELINOR RUMMING

But yet for all that
She drank on the mashvat.

There came an old ribibe¹:
She halted of a kibe,²
And had broken her shin
At the threshold coming in,
And fell so wide open
That one might see her token,
The devil thereon be wroken³!
What need all this be spoken?
She yelléd like a calf.
“Rise up, on God’s half!”
Said Elinor Rumming,
“I beshrew thee for thy coming!”
And as she at her did pluck,
“Quack, quack!” said the duck
In that lampatram’s lap;
With “Fie, cover thy shap
With some flip flap!”
“God give it ill hap,”
Said Elinor, “for shame!” –
Like an honest dame.
Up she start, half lame,
And scantily could go
For pain and for woe.

In came another dant,
With a goose and a gant:
She had a wide weasant,⁴
She was nothing pleasant,
Neckéd like an elephant;
It was a bulliphant,
A greedy cormorant.

Another brought her garlic heads,
Another brought her beads
(Of jet or of coal)
To offer to the ale pole.

¹crone.

²blister.

³wrecked.

⁴windpipe.

Some brought a wimble,
 Some brought a thimble,
 Some brought a silk lace,
 Some brought a pincase,
 Some her husband's gown,
 Some a pillow of down,
 Some of the napery;

And all this shift they make
 For the good ale sake.

“A straw!” said Bely, “stand utter,²
 For we have eggēs and butter,
 And of pigeons a pair.”³

Then start forth a fizgig,⁴
 And she brought a boar pig,
 The flesh thereof was rank,
 And her breath strongly stank;
 Yet, ere she went, she drank,
 And gat her great thank
 Of Elinor for her ware
 That she thither bare
 To pay for her share.
 Now truly, to my thinking,
 This is a solemn drinking!

FIT THE SEVENTH

“Soft!” quod one hight Sybil,
 “And let me with you bibble.”
 She sat down in the place
 With a sorry face
 Whey-worméd about.
 Garnished was her snout

¹A line missing.²stand back. •³A line missing.⁴a light wench.

ELINOR RUMMING

With here and there a puscull¹
 Like a scabbéd muscull.²
 "This ale," said she, "is noppý;
 Let us suppé and soppy
 And not spill a droppy,
 For, so may I hoppy,³
 It cooileth well my croppy.⁴

"Dame Elinor," said she,
 "Have here is for me —
 A clout of London pins!"
 And with that she begins
 The pot to her pluck
 And drank a "good-luck."
 She swinged up a quart
 At once for her part:
 Her paunch was so puffed,
 And so with ale stuffed,
 Had she not hied apace
 She had defiled the place.

Then began the sport
 Among that drunken sort.⁵
 "Dame Elinor," said they,
 "Lend here a cock of hay
 To make all thing clean —
 Ye wot well what we mean!"

But, sir, among all
 That sat in that hall
 There was a prickmedenty⁶
 Sat like a sainty
 And began to painty⁷
 As though she would fainty:
 She made it as coy
 As a *lege de moy*:

¹pimple. ²muscle. ³have good hap. ⁴gullet.
⁵set. ⁶a pernickety one. ⁷feign.

She was not half so wise
 As she was peevish nise.¹
 She said never a word,
 But rose from the board
 And called for our dame,
 Elinor by name.
 We supposéd, ywis,
 That she rose to piss:
 But the very ground
 Was for to compound
 With Elinor in the spence,²
 To pay for her expence.
 "I have no penny nor groat
 To pay," she said, "God wote,
 For washing of my throat,
 But my beads of amber
 Bear them to your chamber."
 Then Elinor did them hide
 Within her beddés side.

But some then sat right sad
 That nothing had
 There of their awn,
 Neither gilt nor pawn³:
 Such were there many
 That had not a penny,
 But, when they should walk,
 Were fain with a chalk
 To score on the balk,⁴
 Or score on the tail:
 God give it ill hail!⁵
 For my fingers itch,
 I have written too mich
 Of this mad mumming
 Of Elinor Rumming!

¹querulous.²store-room.³Neither money nor pledge.⁴board.⁵ill-health.

Thus endeth the geste¹
Of this worthy feast.

Quod Skelton, Laureate.

LAUREATI SKELTONIDIS IN DESPECTU
MALIGNANTIUM DISTICHON²

*Quamvis insanis, quamvis marcescis inanis,
Invide, cantamus: haec loca plena jocis.³
Bien men souvient.*

*Omnes foeminaes, quae nimis bibulae sunt, vel quae sordida
labe squaloris, aut qua spurca foeditatis macula, aut verbosa
loquacitate notantur, poeta invitat ad audiendum hunc libellum,
etc.⁴*

*Ebria, squalida, sordida foemina, prodiga verbis,
Huc surrat, properet, veniat! Sua gesta libellus
Iste volutabit: Paean sua plectra sonando
Materiam risus cantabit carmine rauco.⁵*

Finis.

Quod Skelton, Laureate.

¹story.

²The distich of Skelton Laureate in contempt of evil-speakers.

³Although you are mad, although in your inanity you languish, malicious one, we sing: these places are full of jests.

⁴All women, who are either too drunken, or squalid and dirty, or are distinguished by a filthy mask of foulness, or by wordy loquacity, the poet invites to hear this little book.

⁵The drunken, squalid, dirty woman, prodigal of words, let her run hither, let her hurry, let her come. This little book will tell its own tale: The hymn of praise, sounding its own music, will sing with a harsh note the stuff of laughter.

AGAINST A COMELY COISTROWN¹

*That curiously chanted and currishly countered² and madly
in his musicks mockishly made against the ix. Muses of politic
poems and poets matriculate.*

Of all nations under the heaven,
These frantic foolis I hate most of all;
For though they stumble in the sinnés seven,
In peevishness³ yet they snapper⁴ and fall,
Which men the eighth deadly sin call.
This peevish proud, this prendergest,
When he is well, yet can he not rest.

A sweet sugar-loaf and sour bayards bun⁵
Be somedele like in form and shap,
The one for a duke, the other for dun,
A maunchet⁶ for morell⁷ thereon to snap.
His heart is too high to have any hap;
But for in his gamut carp⁸ that he can,
Lo, Jack would be a gentleman!

With hey trolly lolly, whip here, Jack,
Alumbek sodildim sillorim ben!
Curiously he can both counter and knak⁹
Of Martin Swart¹⁰ and all his merry men.
Lord, how Perkin is proud of his pea-hen!
But ask where he findeth among his monochords
An holy water clerk a ruler of lords.

¹Scullion. ²sang. ³folly, perversity. ⁴stumble.

⁵horse-loaf. ⁶small white loaf. ⁷a black horse.

⁸sing (badly). ⁹sing affectedly.

¹⁰A German nobleman who lead the auxiliaries sent by Duchess of Burgundy with Lambert Simnel, and who fell fighting at Battle of Stoke.

He cannot find it in rule nor in space:

He solfas too haute,¹ his treble is too high;
 He braggeth of his birth, that born was full base;
 His music without measure, too sharp is his *Mi*;
 He trimmeth in his tenor to counter pirdewy;
 His descant is busy, it is without a mean;
 Too fat is his fancy, his wit is too lean.

He lumb'reth on a lewd lute *Roty bully joys*

Rumble down, tumble down, hey go, now, now!
 He fumbleth in his fingering an ugly good noise:
 It seemeth the sobbing of an old sow!
 He would be made much of, an he wist how;
 Well sped in spindles and turning of tavells²;
 A bungler, a brawler, a picker of quarréls.

Comely he clappeth a pair of clavichords;

He whistleth so sweetly, he maketh me to sweat;
 His descant is dashed full of dischords;

A red angry man, but easy to entreat:
 An usher of the hall fain would I get
 To point this proud page a place and a room,
 For Jack would be a gentleman, that late was a groom!

Jack would jet,³ and yet Jill said nay,

He counteth in his countenance to check with the best:
 A malapert meddler that prieth for his prey,
 In a dish dare he rush at the ripést,
 Dreaming in dumpés to wrangle and to wrest:
 He findesth a proportion in his prick-song,⁴
 To drink at a draught a large and a long.⁵

¹highly.

²an instrument used in silk-weaving.

³strut.

⁴counterpoint.

⁵characters in old music: one large=two longs, one long=two breves.

Nay, jape not with him, he is no small fool,
 It is a solemn sire and a sullain:
 For lordes and ladies learn at his school,
 He teacheth them so wisely to solf and to fain¹
 That neither they sing well prick-song nor plain:
 This Doctor Devias commencéd in a cart,
 A master, a minstrel, a fiddler, a fart.

What though ye can counter *Custodi nos*²?
 As well it becometh you, a parish town clerk,
 To sing *Sospitati dedid'aegros*.³
 Yet be ye not too bold to brawl nor to bark
 At me that meddled nothing with your wark:
 Correct first thyself: walk, and be nought!
 Deem what thou list, thou knowest not my thought.

A proverb of old: "Say well or be still!"
 Ye are too unhappy occasion to find
 Upon me to clatter, or else to say ill.
 Now have I shewéd you part of your proud mind:
 Take this in worth, the best is behind!
 Written at Croydon by Crowland in the Clay,
 On candlemas even, the calends of May.

¹sing falsetto. ²Preserve us. ³He gave succour to the sick.

POEMS AGAINST GARNESCHE

*Skelton Laureate, Defender, Against Master Gerneshe,
Challenger, Et Cetera.*

Sith ye have me challengéd, Master Gernesche,
Rudely reviling me in the king's noble hall,
Such another challenger could me no man wish,
But if it were Sir Termagant that tourneyed without nall;
For Sir Frollo de Franko¹ was never half so tall.
But say me now, Sir Satrapas, what authority ye have
In your challenge, Sir Chesten, to call me a knave?

What, have ye kithéd² you a knight, Sir Douglas the
Doughty,
So currishly tobeknave me in the king's palace?
Ye strong sturdy stallion, so stern and stouty,
Ye bear ye bold as Barabas, or Sir Terry of Thrace;
Ye girn³ grimly with your gummés and with your grisly
face!
But say me yet, Sir Satrapas, what authority ye have
In your challenge, Sir Chesten, to call me a knave?

Ye foul, fierce and fell, as Sir Ferumbras the freke,⁴
Sir captain of Catywade, catacumbras of Cayre,⁵
Though ye be lusty as Sir Libius⁶ lances to breke,
Yet your countenance uncomely, your face is not fair:
For all your proud pranking, your pride may impair.
But say me yet, Sir Satrapas, what authority ye have
In your challenge, Sir Chesten, to call me a knave?

¹A Roman knight, governor of Gaul, slain by King Arthur.—
offrey of Monmouth.

²shewn. ³grin.

⁴warrior. A Saracen giant vanquished by Oliver.—Caxton's *Life
Charles the Great*.

⁵Cairo. ⁶See romance *Lybeaus Dis-conus* (*Le beau desconnu*).

Of Mantrible the Bridge,¹ Malchus the murzion,²
 Nor black Balthasar with his basnet³ rough as a bear,
 Nor Lycaon, that loathly lusk,⁴ in mine opinion,
 Nor no boar so brimly⁵ bristléd is with hair,
 As ye are bristléd on the back for all your gay gear.
 But say me yet, Sir Satrapas, what authority ye have
 In your challenge, Sir Chesten, to call me a knave?

Your wind-shaken shanks, your long loathly legs,
 Crooked as a camock,⁶ and as a cow calfless,
 Brings you out of favour with all female tegs:
 That Mistress Punt put you off, it was not all causeless;
 At Orwell hyr havyn⁷ your anger was lawless.
 But say me yet, Sir Satrapas, what authority ye have
 In your challenge, Sir Chesten, to call me a knave?

I say, ye solemn Saracen, all black is your ble⁸;
 As a glede glowing,⁹ your eyen glister as glass,
 Rolling in your hollow head, ugly to see;
 Your teeth tainted with tawny; your snivelly snout doth
 pass,¹⁰
 Hookéd as an hawkēs beak, like Sir Topas.
 Boldly bend you to battle, and busk¹¹ yourself to save:
 Challenge yourself for a fool, call me no more knave!

By the King's most noble commandment.

*Skelton Laureate, Defender, Against Master Garnesche, Chal-
 lenger, with Greasy, Gorbellied Godfrey, Et Cetera.*

How may I your mockery meekly tollerate,
 Your groaning, your grunting, your groining¹² like a
 swine?

¹Concerning the giant who kept this bridge see Caxton, op. cit.

²Moor. ³cap. ⁴vile creature. ⁵fiercely.

⁶crooked stick. ⁷by Harwich. ⁸complexion.

⁹burning coal. ¹⁰excel. ¹¹prepare. ¹²rooting.

Your pride is all to-peevish, your port importunate:

You manticore, ye malapert, ye can both wince and whine;
Your loathsome lere¹ to look on, like a greaséd boot doth
shine.

Ye cappéd Caiaphas copious,² your paltock³ on your pate,
Though ye prate like proud Pilate, beware of check-mate.

Whole is your brow that ye brake with Durandal⁴ your own
sword;

Why hold ye on your cap, sir, then? your pardon is expiréd:
Ye hobble very homely before the king's boord;

Ye counter umwhile⁵ too captiously, and ere ye be
desiréd;

Your moth-eaten mockish manners, they be all to-miréd.
Ye cappéd Caiaphas copious, your paltock on your pate,
Though ye prate like proud Pilate, beware of check-mate.

O Gabionite of Gabion, why do ye gane⁶ and gasp?

Huf a gallant Garnesche, look on your own comely corse!
Lusty Garnesche, like a louse, ye jet full like a jasp⁷;

As witless as a wild goose, ye have but small remorse
Me for to challenge that of your challenge maketh so
little force.⁸

Ye cappéd Caiaphas copious, your paltock on your pate,
Though ye prate like proud Pilate, beware of check-mate.

Sir Guy, Sir Gawain, Sir Cayus,⁹ for and Sir Olivere,

Pyramus, nor Priamus,¹⁰ nor Sir Pyrrus the proud,
In Arthur's ancient actés nowhere is provéd your peer;

The fashion of your physiognomy the devil in a cloud;
Your heart is too haut, ywis, it will not be allowed.

Ye cappéd Caiaphas copious, your paltock on your pate,
Though ye prate like proud Pilate, beware of check-mate.

¹skin. • ²cloaked. ³patch. ⁴Roland's sword.

⁵sing some time. ⁶gape. ⁷wasp(?) ⁸so little matter.

⁹foster brother of King Arthur.

¹⁰Who fought with Sir Gawain (*Morte d'Arthur*).

Ye ground you upon Godfrey, that grisly gorgon's face,

Your standard, Sir Olifaunte,¹ against me for to 'splay:
Bail, bail at you both, frantic fools! follow on the chase!

Come Garnesche, come Godfrey, with as many as ye may!

I advise you beware of this war, range you in array.

Ye capped Caiaphas copious, your paltock on your pate,
Though ye prate like proud Pilate, beware of check-mate.

Gup, gorbellied Godfrey, gup, Garnesche, gawdy fool!

To tourney or to tant with me ye are too far to seek:
For those twain whipslovens call for a cuck-stool²:

Thou manticore, ye marmoset, garnished like a Greek,
Wrangling, wayward, witless, raw, and nothing meek.

Ye capped Caiaphas copious, your paltock on your pate,
Though ye prate like proud Pilate, beware of check-mate.

*Mirres vous y,
Look not too high.*

By the King's most noble commandment.

*Skelton Laureate, Defender, Against Lusty Garnesche,
Well-Beseen Christopher, Challenger, Et Cetera.*

I have your lewd letter receivéd,
And well I have it perceivéd,
And your scribe I have espiéd,
That your mad mind contrivéd.
Saving your usher's rod,³
I cast me⁴ not to be odd
With neither of you twain:
Therefore I write again
How the favour of your face
Is void of all good grace;

¹The giant in Chaucer's *Sir Thopas*.

²a stool fixed to a long pole used for punishing scolds by plunging them into water.

³Garnesche was gentleman-usher to Henry VIII.

⁴I design.

For all your carpet cushions,
Ye have knavish conditions.
Gup, marmoset, jast ye, morell!

I am laureate, I am no lorell.¹
Lewdly your time ye spend
My living to reprehend;
And will never intend
Your own lewdness to amend:
Your English lewdly² ye sort,
And falsely ye me report.
Garnesche, ye gape too wide:
Your knavery I will not hide,
For to assuage your pride.

When ye were younger of age
Ye were a kitchen-page,
A dish-washer, a drivell,³
In the pot your nose did snivell;
Ye fried and ye broiléd,
Ye roasted and ye boiléd,
Ye roasted, like a fon,⁴
A goose with the feet upon;
Ye sluffered up souce⁵
In my Lady Brewse's house.
Whereto should I write
Of such a greasy knight?
A bawdy dish-clout
That bringeth the world about
With hafting and with polling,⁶
With lying and controlling.

At Guines when ye were
But a slender spere,⁷
Deckéd lewdly in your gear;
For when ye dwelt there
Ye had a knavish coat

¹nave. ²ignorantly. ³drudge. ⁴fool.
⁵tripes. ⁶deceiving and stealing. ⁷shoot, stripling.

Was scantly worth a groat;
 In dud frieze ye were shrinéd,
 With better frieze linéd;
 The outside every day,
 Ye might no better a way;
 The inside ye did call
 Your best gown festivall.
 Your drapery ye did want,
 The ward¹ with you was scant.
 When ye cast a sheepés eye,
 Mistress Andelby,
 Guines upon a gong,²
 sat somewhat too long;
 her husband's head
 mall of lead,
 that ye there preachéd,
 To her love ye not reachéd:
 Ye would have bassed⁴ her bum
 So that she would have come
 Onto your lowsy den.
 But she of all men
 Had you most in despight,
 Ye lost her favour quite;
 Your pilléd-garlick head⁵
 Could occupy there no stead;
 She calléd you Sir Guy of Gaunt,
 Noséd like an elephaunt,
 A pickaxe or a twible⁶;
 She said how ye did bridle,
 Much like a dromedary;
 Thus with you she did wary,⁷
 With much matter more
 That I keep in store.

¹wardrobe. ²Dyce notes: portion of MS. torn off here.

³privy. ⁴kissed.

⁵A term applied to a person whose hair has fallen off by disease.

⁶a little axe. ⁷war, contend.

Your breath is strong and quick;
Ye are an elder-stick;
Ye wot what I think –
At both ends ye stink.
Great danger for the king,
When his grace is fasting,
His presence to approach:
It is to your reproach.
It falleth for no swine,
Nor sowters,¹ to drink wine,
Nor such a noddy pole²
A priest for to control.

Little wit in your scribés noll,^a
That scribbled your fond scroll,
Upon him for to take
Against me for to make,
Like a doctor dawpate,
A laureate poet for to rate.
Your termés are too gross,
Too far from the purposé,
To contaminate
And to violate
The dignity laureate.

Bold bayard,⁴ ye are too blind,
And grow all out of kind,
To occupy so your mind;
For reason can I none find
Nor good rhyme in your matter:
I wonder that ye smatter,
So for a knave to clatter!
Ye would be calléd a maker⁵
And make much like Jack Raker;
Ye are a comely craker,⁶
Ye learned of some pie-baker!

¹cobblers. ²ninny. ³noddle. ⁴bay horse.
⁵composer. ⁶vaunter.

Cast up your curious writing,
 And your dirty inditing,
 And your spiteful despiting,
 For all is not worth a miting,¹
 A mackerel nor a whiting:
 Had ye gone with me to school
 And occupied no better your tool,²
 Ye should have kowthéd me a fool.³

But now, gawdy, greasy Garnesche,
 Your face I wis to varnish
 So surely it shall not tarnish.
 Though a Saracen's head ye bear,
 Rough and full of lawsy hair,
 As every man well seeth,
 Full of great knavish teeth,
 In a field of green peason,⁴
 Is rhyme yet out of reason;
 Your wit is so geson⁵
 Ye rail all out of season.

Your skin scabbéd and scurvy,
 Tawny, tannéd, and shurvy;
 Now upon this heat
 Rankly when ye sweat,
 Men say ye will wax lawsy,
 Drunken, droopy, drowsy!
 Your sword ye swear, I ween,
 So trenchant and so keen,
 Shall cut both white and green⁶:
 Your folly is too great
 The king's colours to threat.
 Your breath it is so fell
 And so puauntely⁷ doth smell,

¹a mite.²pen.³made me known for a fool.⁴peas.⁵scanty.⁶i.e. the white and green dress that Skelton wore as Laureate.⁷stinkingly.

MINOR SATIRES

And so heinously doth stink,
 That neither pump nor sink
 Doth savour half so sour
 Against a stormy shower.
 O ladies of bright colour,
 Of beauty that beareth the flower,
 When Garnesche cometh you among
 With his breath so strong,
 Without ye have a confection
 Against his poisoned infection,
 Else with his stinking jaws
 He will cause you cast your crows,
 And make your stomach seek
 Over the perch to preke.*

Now, Garnesche, gard thy gums,
 My serpentines³ and my guns
 Against ye now I bind;
 Thyself therefore defend.
 Thou toad, thou scorpion,
 Thou bawdy babion,⁴
 Thou bear, thou bristled boar,
 Thou Moorish manticore,⁵
 Thou rammish stinking goat,
 Thou fowl churlish parrote,
 Thou grisly Gorgon glaimy,
 Thou sweaty sloven seimy,⁶
 Thou murrian, thou mawment,⁷
 Thou false stinking serpent,
 Thou mockish marmoset,
 I will not die in thy debt!
 Tyburn thou me assignéd,
 Where *thou* should'st have been shrinéd;
 The next halter there shall be
 I bequeath it whole to thee!

*vomit. ^pitch. ³kind of cannon. ⁴filthy baboon.
⁵human-headed dragon. ⁶greasy. ⁷Moor . . . Mahomet.

Such pilfery thou hast packéd,
And so thyself over-watchéd
That there thou should'st be rackéd,
If thou were meetly matchéd.

Ye may well be bedawed,
Ye are a fool outlawed;
And for to tell the ground,
Pay Stokes his five pound.
I say, Sir Dalyrag,
Ye bear you bold and brag
With other menis charge:
Ye cut your cloth too large:
Such polling pageantis¹ ye play,
To point² you fresh and gay.

And he that scribbled your scrollis,
I reckon you in my rollis
For two drunken soulis.
Read and learn ye may
How old proverbis say,
That bird is not honest
That 'fileth his own nest.
If he wist what some wot,³
The flesh basting of his coat
Was sowéd with slender threde:
God send you well good speed,
With *Dominus vobiscum!*
Good Latin for Jack a-Thrum,
Till more matter may come.

By the King's most noble commandment.

¹thievish pranks.

²equip.

³knew what some knew.

*Donum Leaureati Distichon Contra Golliardum Garnesche
Et Scribam Ejus.*

*Tu, Garnesche, fatuus, fatuus tuus est mage scriba:
Qui sapuit puer, insanit vir, versus in hydram.*

*Skelton Laureate, Defender, Against Lusty Garnesche,
Well Be-seen Christopher, Challenger, Et Cetera.*

Garnesche, Gorgon, ghastly, grime,
I have receivéd your second rime.
Though ye can skill of large and long,
Ye sing alway the cuckoo song:
Ye rail, ye rhyme, with "Hey, dog, hey!"
Your churlish chanting is all one lay.
Ye, sir, rail all in deformity!
Ye have not read the property
Of Nature's works, how they be
Mixed with some incommodity,
As proveth well, in his Rhetorics old,
Cicero with his tongue of gold.
That Nature wrought in you and me,
Irrevocable is her decree;
Waywardly wrought she hath in thee,
Behold thyself, and thou may'st see;
Thou shalt behold no where a warse,
Thy mirror may be the devil's arse.
With "Knave, Sir Knave, and knave again!"
To call me knave thou takest great pain:
The proudest knave yet of us twain
Within thy skin he shall remain;
The starkest knave, and least good can,¹
Thou art calléd of every man;
The court, the country, village and town,
Saith from thy toe unto thy crown
Of all proud knavis thou bearest the bell,
Loathsome as Lucifer, lowest in hell.

¹knows.

On that side, on this side thou doth gazé,
 And thinkest thyself Sir Pierre de Brézé,¹
 Thy caitiff's carcass coarse and crazy,
 Much of thy manners I can blazé.²

Of Lombardy George Ardeson,
 Thou would have scoréd his habergeon;
 That gentle George the Januay,³
 Ye would have enticéd his trull away:
 Such pageants with your friends ye play
 With treachery ye them betray.
 Garnesche, ye got of George with gawdry⁴
 Crimson velvet for your bawdry.
 Ye have a fantasy to Fenchurch Street,
 With Lombard's lemmans⁵ for to meet,
 With "Bass me, butting, pretty Cis!"
 Your loathsome lips love well to kiss,
 Slavering like a slimy snail —
 I would ye had kissed her on the tail!

Also not far from Budgē Row,
 Ye presséd pertly to pluck a crow:
 Ye lost your hold, unbend your bow,
 Ye won nothing there but a mow⁶;
 Ye won nothing there but a scorn;
 She would not of it thou had sworn.
 She said ye were colouréd with coal-dust;
 To dally with you she had no lust.
 She said your breath stank like a brock,
 With "Gup, Sir Guy," ye got a mock!
 She swear with her ye should not deal,
 For ye were smery, like a seal,
 And ye were hairy, like a calf;
 She prayed you walk, on Goddēs half!⁷

¹Grand-seneschal of Anjou, Poitou, and Normandy: a warrior in the reigns of Charles VII and Lewis XI.

²shew.

³Genoese.

⁴trickery.

⁵mistresses.

⁶mouth, mock.

⁷i.e. go away, for God's sake.

And thus there ye lost your prey –
Get ye another where ye may.

Disparage ye mine ancestry?
Ye are disposéd for to lie:
I say, thou fell and foul flesh flie,
In this debate I thee ascry.
Thou claimest thee gentle, thou art a cur;
Heralds they know thy coat armur:
Though thou be a gentleman born,
Yet gentleness in thee is thread-bare worn;
Heralds from honour may thee divorce,
For harlots haunt thine hateful corse:
Ye bear out brothels¹ like a bawd,
And get thereby a slender laud
Between the tappet² and the wall –
Fusty bawdias! I say not all.
Of harlots to use such an harrés,³
Ye breed moths in cloth of Arras.

What aileth thee, ribald, on me to rave?
A king to me mine habit gave:
At Oxford, the university,
Advancéd I was to that degree;
By whole consent of their senate
I was made poet laureate.
To call me lorell ye are too lewd:
Lith and listen, all besrewd!
Of the Muses nine, Calliope
Hath 'pointed me to rail on thee.
It 'seemeth not thy pilléd pate
Against a poet laureate
To take upon thee for to scribe:
It 'comes thee better for to drive
A dung-cart or a tumbrel
Than with my poems for to mell.

¹harlots

²tapestry.

³stud.

The honour of England I learnéd to spell,
 In dignity royall that doth excel:
 Note and mark well this parcel.
 I gave him drink of the sugared well
 Of Helicon's waters crystalline,
 Acquainting him with the Muses nine.
 It 'cometh thee well me to remord¹
 That creanser² was to thy sovereign lord!
 It pleaseth that noble prince royall
 Me as his master for to call
 In his learning primordiall.
 Avaunt, ribald, thy tongue reclaim!
 Me to behave thou art to blame.
 Thy tongue untaught, with poison infect,
 Without thou leave thou shalt be checked,
 And taken up in such a frame
 That all the world will spy your shame.
 Avaunt, avaunt, thou sluggish . . .³
 And say poets no dis . . .
 It is for no bawdy knave
 The dignity laureate for to have.

Thou callest me scalléd, thou callest me mad:
 Though thou be pilléd, thou art not sad.
 Thou art frantic and lackest wit
 To rail with me that thee can hit.
 Though it be now full-tide with thee,
 Yet there may fall such casualtie,
 Ere thou be ware, that in a throw
 Thou mayest fall down and ebb full low:
 Wherefore in wealth beware of woe,
 For wealth will soon depart thee fro.
 To know thyself if thou lack grace,
 Learn or be lewd, I shrew⁴ thy face!

Thou seest I calléd thee a peacock:
 Thou list I calléd thee a woodcock;

¹reproach. ²tutor. ³Dyce notes: MS. illegible. ⁴curse

For thou hast a long snout,
 A seemly nose and a stout,
 Prickéd¹ like an unicorn:
 I would some man's back ink-horn
 Were thy nose spectacle-case,
 It would garnish well thy face.

Thou deem'st my railing overthwart:
 I rail to thee such as thou art.
 If thou were acquainted with all
 The famous poets satiricall,
 As Persius and Juvenall,
 Horace and noble Martiall,
 If they were living this day,
 Of thee wot I what they would say:
 They would thee write, all with one stevin,²
 The foulest sloven under heaven!
 Prowd, peevish, lither, and lewd,
 Malapert, meddler, nothing well-thewed,
 Busy, brainless, to brawl and brag,
 Witless, wayward, Sir Wrig-wrag!
 Disdainous, double, full of deceit,
 Lying, spying, by subtlety and sleight,
 Fleering, flattering, false, and fickle,
 Scornful and mocking over too mickle!

My time, I trow, I should but lese³
 To write to thee of tragedies,
 It is not meet for such a knave.
 But now my process for to save,
 Inordinate pride will have a fall.
 Presumptuous pride is all thine hope:
 God guard thee, Gernesche, from the rope!
 Stop a tid,⁴ and be well ware
 Ye be not caught in an hempen snare.
 Harken thereto, ye Harry Hafter,
 Pride goeth before and shame cometh after.

¹pointed. ²voice. ³lose. ⁴betime.

Thou writest, I should let thee go play:
Go play thee, Garnesche, garnishéd gay.
I care not what thou write and say,
I cannot let¹ thee the knave to play,
To dance the hay or run the ray²:
Thy fond face cannot me fray³!
Take this for that, bear this in mind,
Of thy lewdness more is behind;
A ream of paper will not hold
Of thy lewdness that may be told.
My study might be better spent;
But for to serve the king's intent,
His noble pleasure and commandment.
Scribble thou, scribble thou, rail or write,
Write what thou wilt, I shall thee requite!

By the King's most noble commandment.

¹i.e. stop.

²Names of dances.

³frighten.

SKELTON LAUREATE,

Oratoris Regis,

AGAINST VENOMOUS TONGUES

ENPOISONED WITH SLANDER AND FALSE DETRACTIONS, ETC.

*Quid detur tibi, aut quid apponatur tibi ad linguam dolosam?*¹

*Deus destruet te in finem; evellet te, et emigrabit te de tabernaculo tuo, et radicem tuam de terra viventium.*²

All matters well pondered and well to be regarded,
How should a false lying tongue then be rewarded?
Such tongues should be torn out by the hard roots,
Hoigning³ like hogs that groignis⁴ and roots.

*Dilexisti omni verba praeципitationis, lingua dolosa.*⁵

For, as I have read in volumes old,
A false lying tongue is hard to withhold;
A slanderous tongue, a tongue of a scold,
Worketh more mischief than can be told;
That, if I wist not to be controlled,
Yet somewhat to say I dare well be bold,
How some delight for to lie thick and threefold.

*Ad sennam hominem redigit comice et graphice.*⁶

¹“What shall be given unto thee, or what shall be done unto thee, thou deceitful tongue?” — Ps. cxix. 3 (Vulg.).

²“God shall destroy thee for ever; he shall take thee up, and pluck thee out of thy tent, and root thee out of the land of the living.” — Ps. li. 7 (Vulg.).

³grunting. ⁴nuzzles.

⁵“Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.” — Ps. li. 6 (Vulg.).

⁶He brings a man to mockery, derisively and cunningly.

For ye said that he said that I said – wot ye what?
 I made, he said, a windmill of an old mat:
 If there be none other matter but that
 Then ye may commend me to gentle Cock-wat.

*Hic notat purpuraria arte intextas literas Romanas in amictibus post ambulonum ante et retro.*¹

For before on your breast, and behind on your back,
 In Roman letters I never found lack:
 In your cross row nor Christ cross you speed,
 Your Paternoster, your Ave, nor your Creed.
 Whosoever that tale unto you told,
 He saith untruly, to say that I wold
 Control the cognizance² of noble men
 Either by language or with my pen.

Paedagogium meum de sublimiori Minerva constat esse: ergo,
*etc.*³

My school is more solemn and somewhat more hault⁴
 Than to be found in any such fault.

*Paedagogium meum male sanos maledicos sibilis complosisque manibus explodit, etc.*⁵

My schools are not for unthrifts untaught,
 For frantic faitors⁶ half mad and half straught⁷;
 But my learning is of another degree
 To taunt them like lithrous,⁸ lewd⁹ as they be.

¹Here he speaks in shining verse of the Roman letters, woven into their garments, vaunted before and behind (?). I suppose – those who wear their university degrees and orders embroidered on their clothes.

²crests.

³It is agreed that my school is of a loftier wisdom: therefore, etc.
⁴exalted.

⁵My school drives away with hissing and clapping of hands the scarcely sane slanderers.

⁶scoundrels. ⁷half in their senses. ⁸knaves. ⁹ignorant, vile.

*Laxent ergo antennam elationis suae inflatam vento vanitatis.*¹

For though some be lithrous, and list for to rail,
Yet to lie upon me they cannot prevail:
Then let them vale a bonet² of their proud sail,
And of their taunting toys rest with ill-hail.

*Nobilitati ignobilis cedat vilitas, etc.*³

There is no nobleman will judge in me
Any such folly to rest or to be:
I care much the less whatever they say,
For tongues untied be running astray;
But yet I may say safely, so many well-lettered,
Embroidered, enlaced together, and fettered,⁴
And so little learning, so lewdly allowed,
What fault find ye herein but may be avowed?
But ye are so full of vertibility,⁵
And of frantic folability,⁶
And of melancholy mutability,
That ye would coarct and enforce me
Nothing to write, but hay de guy of three,⁷
And I to suffer you lewdly to lie
Of me with your language full of villany!

*Sicut novacula acuta fecisti dolum.*⁸

Malicious tongues, though they have no bones,
Are sharper than swords, sturdier than stones.

*Lege Philostratum de vita Tyanaei Apollonii.*⁹

¹Therefore let them slacken the sail-yard of their elation blown out with the wind of vanity.

²lower one of the smaller sails.

³Let base vileness yield to nobility.

⁴wearing their degrees, as before (?). ⁵variableness. ⁶folly.

⁷i.e. dance heydegues. But here, evidently, it means "ballads."

⁸"Like a sharp razor, working deceitfully." – Ps. li. 4 (Vulg.).

⁹Read Philostratus concerning the life of Apollonius of Tyana.

Sharper than razors that shave and cut throatis.
More stinging than scorpions that stang Pharaotis.¹

*Venenum aspidum sub labiis eorum.*²

More venomous and much more virulent
Than any poisoned toad or any serpent.

*Quid peregrinis egemus exemplis? – ad domestica recurramus.*³

Such tongues unhappy hath made great division
In realms, in cities, by such false abusion;
Of false fickle tongues such cloaked collusion
Hath brought noble princes to extreme confusion.

*Quiquid loquantur, ut effoeminantur, ita effantur, etc.*⁴

Sometime women were put in great blame,
Men said they could not their tongues atame;
But men take upon them now all the shame,
With scolding and slandering make their tongues lame

*Novarum rerum cupidissimi, captatores, delatores, adulatores,
invigilatores, deliratores, etc.*⁵

For men be now tratlers and tellers of tales:
What tidings at Totnam, what newis in Wales,
What shipis are sailing to Scalish Malis?⁶
And all is not worth a couple of nut-shellis:
But leering and lurking here and there like spies –
The devil tear their tongues and pick out their eyes!
Then run they with lesings⁷ and blow them about,
With “He wrote such a bill⁸ withouten doubt!”

¹Pharaoh (?). ²The poison of vipers beneath their lips.

³Why do we need foreign examples? – let us revert to our own country.

⁴Whatever they say, they chatter as if they were women.

⁵Greedy of novelty, legacy-hunters, informers, flatterers, spies.

⁶Cadiz.

⁷falsehoods.

⁸letter.

With "I can tell you what such a man said -
An you knew all, ye would be ill-apayéd."

*De more vulpino, gannientes ad aurem, fictas fabellas fabricant.*¹

*Inauspicatum, male ominatum, infortunatum se fateatur
habuisse horoscopum, quicunque maledixerit vati Pierio,
Skeltonidi Laureato, etc.*²

But if that I knew what his name hight,
For clattering of me I would him soon 'quite;
For his false lying, of that I spake never,
I could make him shortly repent him for ever:
Although he made it never so tough,
He might be sure to have shame enough.

*Cerbus horrendo barathri latrando sub antro
Te rodatque voret, lingua dolosa, precor.*³

A false double tongue is more fierce and fell
Than Cerebus the cur couching in the kennel of hell;
Whereof hereafter I think for to write,
Of false double tongues in the dispite.

*Recipit se scripturum opus sanctum, laudabile, asseptabile,
memorabileque, et nimis honorificandum.*⁴

*Disperdat Dominus universa labia dolosa et linguam magni-
loquam!*⁵

¹Wolfishly, snarling in the ear, they frame their false fables.

²Whoever shall have spoken ill of the Pierian poet, Skelton Laureate, let him confess that he has had an inauspicious, ill-omened horoscope.

³I pray that Cerebus, with horrid barking beneath the cave of the abyss, may bite you and devour you, deceitful tongue.

⁴He undertakes to write a book holy, laudable, acceptable, memorable and altogether honourable.

⁵May God destroy all deceitful lips and boasting tongues!

RECULE AGAINST GAGUIN¹

*Gaguinus orator Gallus contra Anglos.
Stamus tum crebris frustra contentibus Anglos, etc.*

How darest thou swear, or be so bold also,
To blaspheme him that is very rete² and kind,
And pull his arms his patron's body fro?
Alas, what unkindness is in thy mind
If thou were to thy earthly king so unkind?
Thou should'st be drawen and hanged by the chin
As traitor horrible, though thou were next³ of his kin.

¹Referred to in *Garland of Laurel*. Discovered by Brie among the MSS. at Trinity College, Cambridge (o. 2. 53, fol. 165-6), and printed by him in his *Skelton-Studien*. *Recule* is properly a collection of writings. Skelton again refers to "Maister Gaguin, the chronicler," in *Why Come Ye Not to Court?*

²right(?).

³nearest.

THE MANNER OF THE WORLD NOWADAYS¹

So many pointed caps
Laced with double flaps,
And so gay feltered hats,

Saw I never:

So many good lessons,
So many good sermons,
And so few devotions,

Saw I never.

So many gardēs² worn,
Jagged and all to-torn,
And so many falsely forsworn,

Saw I never:

So few good policies
In townēs and cities
For keeping of blind hostries,³

Saw I never.

So many good workēs,⁴
So few well-learnēd clerkēs,
And so few that goodness markēs,

Saw I never:

¹Collated with Sloane MS. 747, fol. 88. After including it in his text, Dyce suspected the genuineness of this poem. "It may, after all, be Skelton's," he adds, "but at any rate it is only a *rifacimento* of the verses found in the Sloane MS." Nevertheless, it seems to me to have a Skeltonian ring, and I have included it, not only for its own merits, but for the parallel it affords with certain passages of *Colin Clout*, and the last pages of *Speak, Parrot*, where the refrain, "Since Dewcalion's flood was never," etc., is something similar.

²trimmings.

³inns.

⁴i.e. books.

Such prankéd coats and sleeves,
So few young men that preves,¹
And such increase of thieves,
Saw I never.

So many garded hose,
Such pointed shoes,
And so many envious foes,
Saw I never:
So many inquests sit
With men of smalé wit,
And so many falsely quit,
Saw I never.

So many gay swordés,
So many altered wordés,
And so few covered boardés,
Saw I never:
So many empty purses,
So few good horses,
And so many curses,
Saw I never.

Such boasters and braggers,
So new fashioned daggers,
And so many beggers,
Saw I never:
So many proper knives,
So well apprelled wives
And so ill of their lives,
Saw I never.

So many cuckold-makers,
So many crakers,²
And so many peace-breakers,
Saw I never:

¹turn out well.

²boasters.

MINOR SATIRES

So much vain clothing
 With cutting and jagging,
 And so much bragging,
 Saw I never.

So many newés and knackés,
 So many naughty packés,¹
 And so many that money lackés,
 Saw I never:
 So many maidens with child
 And wilfully beguiled,
 And so many places untiled,
 Saw I never.

So many women blaméd
 And righteously defaméd,
 And so little ashaméd,
 Saw I never:
 Widows so soon wed
 After their husbands be dead,
 Having such haste to bed,
 Saw I never.

So much striving
 For goodés and for wiving,
 And so little thriving,
 Saw I never:
 So many capacities,
 Offices and pluralities,
 And changing of dignities,
 Saw I never.

So many laws to use
 The truth to refuse,
 Such falsehood to excuse,
 Saw I never:

¹knaves.

Executors having the ware,
Taking so little care
How the soul doth fare,
Saw I never.

Among them that are rich,
Where friendship is to seche,¹
Such fair glosing speech,
Saw I never:
So many poor
Coming to the door,
And so small succour,
Saw I never.

So proud and so gay,
So rich in array,
And so scant of money,
Saw I never:
So many bowyers,²
So many fletchers,³
And so few good archers,
Saw I never.

So many cheepers,⁴
So few buyers,
And so many borrowers,
Saw I never:
So many ale-sellers
In bawdy holes and cellars,
Of young folks ill-councillors,
Saw I never.

So many pinkers,
So many thinkers,
And so many good ale-drinkers,
Saw I never:

¹i.e. to seek, to be looked for.

²bow-makers.

³arrow-makers.

⁴sellers.

MINOR SATIRES

So many wrongs,
So few merry songs,
And so many ill tongues,
Saw I never.

So many a vagabond
Through all this lond,
And so many in prison bond,
I saw never:
So many citations,
So few oblations,
And so many new fashions,
Saw I never.

So many flying tales,
Pickers of purses and males,
And so many sales,
Saw I never:
So much preaching,
Speaking fair and teaching,
And so ill believing,
Saw I never.

So much wrath and envy,
Covetous and gluttony,
And so little charity,
Saw I never:
So many carders,
Revellers and dicers,
And so many ill-ticers,²
Saw I never.

So many lollers,³
So few true tollers,⁴

•¹wallets. ²evil-enticers. ³heretics.
⁴tellers, preachers.

So many bawds and pollers,¹

Saw I never:

Such treachery,

Simony and usury,

Poverty and lechery,

Saw I never.

So many cloisters closéd,

And priests at large looséd,

Being so evil-disposéd,

Saw I never:

God save our sovereign lord the King,

And all his royal spring,

For so noble a prince reigning,

Saw I never.

So many Easterlings,

Lombards and Flemings,

To bear away our winnings,

Saw I never:

By their subtle ways

All England decays,

For such false Januays,²

Saw I never.

Sometime we sang of mirth and play,

But now our joy is gone away,

For so many fall in decay,

Saw I never:

Whither is the wealth of England gone?

The spiritual saith they have none,

And so many wrongfully undone,

Saw I never.

It is great pity that every day

So many bribers go by the way,

¹plunderers.

²Genoese.

And so many extortioners in each countrey,
Saw I never:
To thee, Lord, I make my moan,
For thou mayst help us every one:
Alas, the people is so woe-begone,
Worse was it never!

Amendment
Were convenient,
But it may not be:
We have exiled veritie.
God is neither dead nor sick;
He may amend all yet,
And trow ye so indeed,
As ye believe ye shall have mede.
After better I hope ever,
For worse was it never.

Finis. J. S.

Hereafter followeth the Book entitled

WARE THE HAWK

Per Skelton, Laureate

Prologus Skeltonidis Leaureati Super Ware the Hawk

This work deviséd is
For such as do amiss;
And specially to control
Such as have cure of soul,
That be so far abused¹
They cannot be excused
By reason nor by law;
But that they play the daw,²
To hawk, or else to hunt
From the alter to the font,
With cry unreverent,
Before the sacrament,
Within the holy church's boundis,
That of our faith the ground is.
That priest that hawkis so
All grace is far him fro;
He seemeth a schismatic,
Or else an heretic,
For faith in him is faint.
Therefore to make complaint
Of such misadviséd
Parsons and disguisé,³
This book we have deviséd,
Compendiously comprisé,

¹depraved,

²i.e. play the fool
³guilty of unbecoming conduct.

MINOR SATIRES

No good priest to offend,
 But such daws to amend,
 In hope that no man shall
 Be miscontent withall.

I shall make you relation,
 By way of apostrophation,
 Under supportation
 Of your patient toleration,
 How I, Skelton Laureate,
 Devised and also wrate
 Upon a lewd curate,
 A parson beneficed,
 But nothing well advised:
 He shall be as now nameless,
 But he shall not be blameless,
 Nor he shall not be shameless;
 For sure he wrought amiss
 To hawk in my church at Diss.
 This fond frantic falconer,
 With his polluted pawtener,¹
 As priest unreverent,
 Straight to the sacrament
 He made his hawk to fly,
 With hugeous shout and cry.
 The high alter he stripped naked;
 Thereon he stood and crakéd²;
 He shook down all the clothes,
 And sware horrible oaths
 Before the face of God,
 By Moses and Aaron's rod,
 Ere that he hence yede³
 His hawk should pray and feed
 Upon a pigeon's maw.
 The blood ran down raw
 Upon the alter-stone;

¹scrip.²vaunted.³went.

The hawk tiréd on a bone;
 And in the holy place
 She dungéd there a chace¹
 Upon my corporas' face.²
 Such *sacrificium laudis*³
 He made with such gambawdis.⁴

OBSERVE

His second hawk waxed gery,⁵
 And was with flying weary;
 She had floweren so oft,
 That on the rood-loft⁶
 She perchéd her to rest.
 The falconer then was prest,⁷
 Came running with a dow,⁸
 And cried "Stow, stow, stow!"⁹
 But she would not bow.
 He then, to be sure,
 Called her with a lure.¹⁰
 Her meat was very crude,
 She had not well endued¹¹;
 She was not clean ensaiméd,¹²
 She was not well reclaiméd¹³:
 But the falconer unfainéd¹⁴
 Was much more febler brainéd.
 The hawk had no list¹⁵
 To come to his fist;
 She looked as she had the frounce¹⁶;

¹a spot. ²the communion-cloth that covers the bread, or body.

³sacrifice of praise. ⁴lewd gambols. ⁵giddy.

⁶a loft or niche where stood a crucifixion wit hfigures of the Virgin and St. John.

⁷ready. ⁸pigeon. ⁹i.e. called her back to his fist.

¹⁰an imitation bird made of feathers and leather. *

¹¹digested. ¹²purged of grease.

¹³sufficiently tame to return to hand. ¹⁴displeased.

¹⁵no wish. ¹⁶an hawk's distemper.

MINOR SATIRES

With that he gave her a bounce
 Full upon the gorge.¹
 I will not feign nor forge –
 The hawk with that clap
 Fell down with evil hap.
 The church doors were sparréd,
 Fast bolted and barréd,
 Yet with a pretty gin²
 I fortuned to come in,
 This rebel to behold,
 Whereof I him controll'd.
 But he said that he wold,
 Against my mind and will,
 In my church hawk still.

CONSIDERATE

On Saint John decollation³
 He hawkéd in this fashion,
Tempore vesperarum,
*Sed non secundum Sarum,*⁴
 But like a March harum
 His brainés were so *parum.*
 He said he would not let⁵
 His houndis for to fet,⁶
 To hunt there by liberty
 In the despite of me,
 And to halloo there the fox:
 Down went my offering-box,
 Book, bell, and candle,
 All that he might handle!
 Cross, staff, lectern, and banner,
 Fell down in this manner.

¹i.e. the crop.²contrivance.³On the festival of the beheading of St. John.⁴At the time of vespers, but not according to Sarum; i.e. not according to precedent – the original Ordinal made by Osmond, Bishop of Sarum in 1090.⁵stop.⁶fetch.

DELIBERATE

With troll, citrace, and troy,¹
 They rangéd, Hankin Bovy,²
 My church all about.
 This falconer then gan shout,
 "These be my gospellers,³
 These be my epistlers,⁴
 These be my choristers
 To help me to sing,
 My hawks to matins ring!"
 In this priestly gyding⁵
 His hawk then flew upon
 The rood with Mary and John.
 Dealt he not like a fon⁶?
 Dealt he not like a daw?
 Or else is this God's law,
 Decrees or decretals,
 Or holy sinodals,
 Or else provincials,
 Thus within the walls
 Of holy church to deal,
 Thus to ring a peal
 With his hawkis bells?
 Doubtless such losells,
 Make the church to be
 In small authoritie:
 A curate in speciall
 To snapper⁸ and to fall
 Into this open crime:
 To look on this were time

¹i.e. with skips, capers, etc.²A dance properly called Hankin Booby.³that sing the Gospel. ⁴that sing the mass.⁶fool.⁷knaves.⁵behaviour.⁸stumble.

VIGILATE

But whoso that looks
 In the official books,
 There he may see and read
 That this is matter indeed.
 Howbeit, maiden Meed
 Made them to be agreed,
 And so the Scribe was feed,
 And the Pharisey
 Then durst nothing say,
 But let the matter slip,
 And made truth to trip;
 And of the spiritual law
 They made but a gewgaw,
 And took it out in drink,
 And thus the cause doth shrink:
 The church is thus abuséd,
 Reproachéd and polluted,
 Correction hath no place,
 And all for lack of grace

DEPLORATE

Look now in *Exodi*¹
 And *de arca Domini*,²
 With *Regum*³ by and by
 (The Bible will not lie)
 How the Temple was kept,
 How the Temple was swept,
 Where *sanguis taurorum*,⁴
Aut sanguis vitulorum,⁵
 Was offered within the walls,
 After ceremonials;
 When it was polluted
 Sentence was executed,

¹Exodus. ²concerning the Ark of the Lord. ³Kings.
⁴blood of bulls. ⁵Or blood of calves.

By way of expiation
For reconciliation.

DEVINATE

Then much more, by the rood,
Where Christis precious blood
Daily offered is,
To be polluted this¹;
And that he wished withall
That the dove's dung might fall
Into my chalice at mass,
When consecrated was
The blessed sacrament.
O priest unreverent!
He said that he would hunt
From the alter to the font.

REFORMATE

Of no tyrant I read
That so far did exceed,
Neither Dioclesian,
Nor yet Domitian,
Nor yet crooked Cacus,²
Nor yet drunken Bacchus;
Neither Olibrius,³
Nor Dionysus,
Neither Phalary⁴
Rehearsed in Valery⁵;
Nor Sardanapall,
Unhappiest of all;
Nor Nero the worst,

¹thus.

²A cruel giant who ruled in Carthage. See Caxton's *Recuyel of the Histories of Troy*.

³Who tortured and beheaded St. Margaret at Antioch.

⁴i.e. Philaris.

⁵recorded in Valerius Maximus.

Nor Claudius the curst;
 Nor yet Egeas,
 Nor yet Sir Ferumbras¹;
 Neither Zorobabell,
 Nor cruel Jezebell;
 Nor yet Tarquinius,
 Whom Titus Livius
 In writing doth enroll;
 I have read them poll by poll²;
 The story of Aristobell,³
 And of Constantinopell,
 Which city miscreants wan
 And slew many a Christian man;
 Yet the Soldan, nor the Turk,
 Wrought never such a work,
 For to let their hawkēs fly
 In the Church of Saint Sophy;
 With much matter more,
 That I keep in store.

PENSITATE

Then in a table plain
 I wrote a verse or twain,
 Whereat he made disdain:
 The peckish parson's brain
 Could not reach nor attain
 What the sentence meant.
 He said, for a crooked intent,
 The wordēs were perverted:
 And thus he overthwarted.⁴
 Of the which process

¹Saracen giant vanquished by Oliver.

²head by head, one by one.

³Aristobulus, high-priest and governor of Judaea, who starved his mother to death and assassinated his brother.

⁴boasted.

Ye may know more express
 If it please you to look
 In the residue of this book.

Hereafter followeth the table.

Look on this table,
 Whether thou art able
 To read or to spell
 What these verses tell.

*Sicculo luteris est colo buraara
 Nixphedras visarum caniuter tuntantes
 Raterplas Natanbrian umsudus itnugenus.
 18. 10. 2. 11. 19. 4. 13. 3. 3. 1. ten valet.
 Chartula stet, precor, haec nullo temeranda petulco:
 Hos rapiet numeros non homo, sed mala bos.
 Ex parte rem chartae adverte asperte, pone Musam Arethusam
 hanc.*¹

Whereto should I rehearse
 The sentence² of my verse?
 In them be no schools
 For brain-sick frantic fools:
*Construas hoc,*³
*Domine Dawcock!*⁴
 Ware the hawk!
*Maister sophista,*⁵
*Ye simplex syllagista,*⁶
*Ye devilish dogmatista,*⁷
 Your hawk on your fista,
 To hawk when you lista.⁸

¹Dyce notes: "The meaning of this 'table plain' is quite beyond my comprehension." It is a cryptogram to which the key has been lost.

²meaning ³construe thou this. ⁴Master Dunce.

⁵sophist. ⁶foolish syllogiser. ⁷dogmatist.

⁸when you like.

In ecclesia ista,
Domine concupisti,¹
 With thy hawk on they fisty?
Nunquid sic dixisti?
Nunquid sic fecisti?
Sed ubi hoc legisti,
Aut unde hoc,²
 Doctor Dawcock?
 Ware the hawk!
 Doctor *Dialectica*,³
 Where find you in *Hypothetica*,⁴
 Or in *Categoria*,⁵
Latina sive Dorica,⁶
 To use your hawkis *forica*?
In propitiatorio,
Tanquam diversorio⁸?
Unde hoc,
Domine Dawcock?
 Ware the hawk!
 Say to me, Jack Haris,
Quare aucuparis
*Ad sacramentum altaris?*⁹
 For no reverence thou sparis
 To shake thy pigeon's feederis¹⁰

¹In this church,
 Master, you have desired.

²Did you never say so?
 Did you never act so?
 But where did you gather that,
 Or whence this?

³Dr. Logician. ⁴Hypotheses. ⁵Categories.

⁶In Latin or in Greek. ⁷Lavatory.

⁸In the propitiatory,
 As if it were in the tavern.

⁹Why do you go bird-catching
 By the sacrament of the altar?

¹⁰feathers.

*Super arcam foederis*¹:
Unde hoc,
 Doctor Dawcock?
 Ware the hawk!
*Sir Dominus vobiscum,*²
*Per aucupium*³
 Ye made your hawk to come:
Desuper candelabrum
*Christi Crucifixi*⁴
 To feed upon your fisty:
Dic, inimice crucis Christi,
Ubi didicisti
*Facere hoc,*⁵
Domine Dawcock?
 Ware the hawk!
Apostata Julianus,
*Nor yet Nestorianus,*⁶
 Thou shalt nowhere read
 That they did such a deed,
 To let their hawks fly
Ad ostium tabernaculi,
In que est corpus Domine:
*Cave hoc,*⁷
 Doctor Dawcock!
 Ware the hawk!

¹Over the Ark of the Covenant.

²cant term for priest. ³By fowling.

⁴From above the candlesticks
 Of Christ's crucifixion.

⁵Say, enemy of Christ's cross,
 Where did you learn
 To do this?

⁶Nestorius.

⁷Even to the door of the tabernacle,
 Where the body of the Lord is:
 Ware this!

Thus doubtless ye ravéd,
 Diss church ye thus depravéd;
 Wherefore, as I be savéd,
 Ye are therefore beknavéd:
Quare? quia Evangelia,
Concha et conchylia,
Accipter et sonalia,
Et bruta animalia,
Caetera quoque talia
Tibi sunt aequalia¹:
Unde hoc,
Domine Dawcock?

Ware the hawk!
Et relis et ralis,
Et reliqualis,
 From Granada to Galis,²
 From Winchelsea to Walés,
Non est brain-sick talés,
Nec minus rationalis,
*Nec magis bestialis,*³
 That sings with a chalice:
Construas hoc,
 Doctor Dawcock!
 Ware the hawk!
 Mazéd, witless, smery smith,
 Hampar with thy hammer upon thy stith,⁴

¹Why? because the Gospels,
 Holy shells [i.e. shells that were numbered among the sacred
 vessels of the church] and shell-fish,
 A hawk and bells [i.e. attached to the bird's feet],
 And brutish animals,
 And other such things
 Are all alike to you.

²Galicia.

³Nor less reasonable,
 Nor more bestial.

⁴anvil.

And make there of a sickle or a saw,
For though ye live a hundred year, ye shall
die a daw.

*Vos valete,¹
Doctor indiscrete!*

¹Fare thou well.

AGAINST THE SCOTS

Skelton Laureate Against the Scots

Against the proud Scots clattering,
That never will leave their tratling:
Won they the field, and lost their king?
They may well say, Fie on that winning!

Lo, these fond sots
And tratling Scots,
How they are blind
In their own mind,
And will not know
Their overthrow
At Brankston Moor!
They are so stour,¹
So frantic mad,
They say they had
And won the field
With spear and shield:
That is as true
As black is blue
And green is gray!
Whatever they say,
Jemmy² is dead
And closed in lead,
That was their own king:
Fie on that winning!
At Flodden hills³
Our bows, our bills,⁴
Slew all the floure
Of their honour.

¹obstinate. — ²i.e. James IV. — ³i.e. on September 9th, 1513.
⁴i.e. halberds.

Are not these Scots
 Fools and sots,
 Such boast to make,
 To prate and crake,
 To face, to brace,¹
 All void of grace,
 So proud of heart,
 So overthwart,
 So out of frame,
 So void of shame,
 As it is enrolled,
 Written and told
 Within this quaire?²
 Who list to repair,
 And therein read,
 Shall find indeed
 A mad reckoning,
 Considering all thing,
 That the Scots may sing
 Fie on the winning!

When the Scot Lived

Jolly Jemmy, ye scornful Scot,
 Is it come unto your lot
 A solemn sumner³ for to be?
 It 'greeth nought for your degree
 Our king of England for to cite,⁴
 Your sovereign lord, our prince of might:
 Ye for to send such a citation,
 It shameth all your naughty nation,
 In comparison but king Copping
 Unto our prince, anointed king!

¹vaunt . . . brag. ²book. ³summoner.

⁴James sent his defiance to Henry VIII while the latter was encamped before Terouenne.

Ye play Hob Lobbins of Lowdean¹;
 Ye shew right well what good ye can;
 Ye may be lord of Locrian,²—
 Christ cense you with a frying-pan!
 Of Edinburgh and Saint Johnis town³:
 Adieu, Sir Sumner, cast off your crown!

When the Scot was Slain

Continually I shall remember
 The merry month of September,
 With the ninth day of the same,
 For then began our mirth and game;
 So that now I have deviséd,
 And in my mind I have compriséd,
 Of the proud Scot, King Jemmy,
 To write some little tragedy,⁴
 For no manner consideration
 Of any sorrowful lamentation,
 But for the special consolation
 Of all our royal English nation.

Melpomene, O muse tragediall,
 Unto your grace for grace now I call
 To guide my pen and my pen to enbibe⁵!
 Illumine me, your poet and your scribe,
 That with mixture of aloes and bitter gall
 I may compound conjectures for a cordiall,
 To anger the Scots and Irish keterings⁶ withall,
 That late were discomfet with battle martiall.

Thalia, my Muse, for you also call I,
 To touch them with taunts of your harmony,
 A medley to make of mirth with sadness,
 The hearts of England to comfort with gladness!

¹Lothian.—²Loch Ryan. ³Perth. ⁴i.e. tragic narrative.

⁵moisten. ⁶Highlanders and Islesmen.

And now to begin I will me address,
To you rehearsing the sum of my process.

King Jamey, Jemmy, Jocky my jo,¹
Ye summoned our king, — why did ye so?
To you nothing it did accord
To summon our king, your sovereign lord.
A king, a sumner! it was great wonder:
Know ye not sugar and salt assunder?
Your sumner too saucy, too malapert,
Your herald in arms not yet half expert.
Ye thought ye did yet valiantly,
Not worth three skips of a pie!²
Sir skirgalliard, ye were so skit,³
Your will then ran before your wit.

Your alledge ye laid and your ally,
Your frantic fable not worth a fly,
French king, or one or other;
Regarded ye should your lord, your brother.⁴
Trowéd ye, Sir Jemmy, his noble grace
From you, Sir Scot, would turn his face?
With, Gup, Sir Scot of Galloway,
Now is your pride fall to decay!
Male vred⁵ was your false intent
For to offend your president,
Your sovereign lord most reverent,
Your lord, your brother, and your regent.

In him is figured Melchizadek,
And ye were disloyal Amelek.
He is our noble Scipione,
Anointed king; and ye were none,

¹joy.

²magpie.

³hasty.

⁴James married Margaret, sister of Henry VIII.

⁵ill-fortuned.

Though ye untruly your father have slain.¹
 His title is true in France to reign²;
 And ye, proud Scot, Dundee, Dunbar,
 Parde, ye were his homagar,
 And suitor to his parliament:
 For your untruth now are ye shent.³
 Ye bear yourself somewhat too bold,
 Therefore ye lost your copyhold;
 Ye were bond tentant to his estate;
 Lost is your game, ye are check-mate.

Unto the castle of Norham,
 I understand, too soon ye came.
 At Brankston Moor and Flodden hills,
 Our English bows, our English bills,
 Against you gave so sharp a shower
 That of Scotland ye lost the flower.
 The White Lion,⁴ there rampant of mood,
 He ragéd and rent out your heart-blood;
 He the White, and ye the Red,⁵
 The White there slew the Red stark dead.
 Thus for your guerdon quit are ye,
 Thanked be God in Trinitie,
 And sweet Saint George, Our Lady's knight!
 Your eye is out: adew, good-night!

Ye were stark mad to make a fray,
 His grace being out of the way:
 But, by the power and might of God,
 For your own tail ye made a rod!

¹James III was murdered by an unknown hand in a cottage after his flight from the battle of Sauchie-burn, where his son (then seventeen) had appeared in arms against him. James IV was always haunted by remorse for his father's death and wore in penance an iron girdle, the weight of which he every year increased.

²Reference to Henry's pretensions to the French crown.

³destroyed. ⁴The Earl of Surrey's badge.

⁵the royal arms of Scotland.

Ye wanted wit, sir, at a word;
 Ye lost your spurs, ye lost your sword.
 Ye might have buskéd¹ you to Huntley banks,
 Your pride was peevish to play such pranks:
 Your poverty could not attain
 With our king royal war to maintain.

Of the king of Navarre ye might take heed,²
 Ungraciously how he doth speed:
 In double dealing so he did dream
 That he is king without a ream³;
 And, for example ye would none take,
 Experience hath brought you in such a brake.⁴
 Your wealth, your joy, your sport, your play,
 Your bragging boast, your royal array,
 Your beard so brim⁵ as boar at bay,
 Your Seven Sisters,⁶ that gun so gay,
 All have ye lost and cast away.
 Thus Fortune hath turned you, I dare well say,
 Now from a king to a clot of clay:
 Out of your robes ye were shakéd,
 And wretchedly ye lay stark naked.
 For lack of grace hard was your hap:
 The Pope's curse⁷ gave you that clap.

Of the out isles⁸ the rough-footed Scots,
 We have well-eased them of the bots⁹:
 The rude rank Scots, like drunken dranes,¹⁰
 At English bows have fetched their banes.

¹hied.

²A reference to Henry's letter in reply to James. See Hall's *Chronicle* (Henry VIII).

³realm.

⁴trap.

⁵fierce.

⁶seven huge cannons from Edinburgh Castle.

⁷James died excommunicated for infringing the pacification with England.

⁸the Hebrides.

⁹the worms.

¹⁰drones.

MINOR SATIRES

It is not fitting in tower and town
 A sumner to wear a king's crown:
 Fortune on you therefore did frown;
 Ye were too high, ye are cast down.
 Sir Sumner, now where is your crown?
 Cast off your crown, cast up your crown!
 Sir Sumner, now ye have lost your crown.

*Quod Skelton Laureate, orator to the King's
 most royal estate.*

*Unto Divers People That Remord¹ This Rhyming Against
 The Scot Jemmy*

I am now constrained,
 With words nothing feigned,
 This invective to make,
 For some peoples' sake
 That list for to jangle
 And waywardly to wrangle
 Against this my making,
 Their males² threat shaking,
 At it reprehending,
 And venomously stinging,
 Rebuking and remording,
 And nothing according.

Cause have they none other,
 But for that he was brother,
 Brother unnatural
 Unto our king royal,
 Against whom he did fight
 Falsely against all right,
 Like unto that untrue rebel
 False Cain against Abel.

¹blame.

²wallets.

Whoso therat picketh mood,¹
The tokens are not good
To be true English blood;
For, if they understood
His traitorly despite,
He was a recreant knight,
A subtle schismatic,
Right near an heretic,
Of grace out of the state,
And died excommunicate.

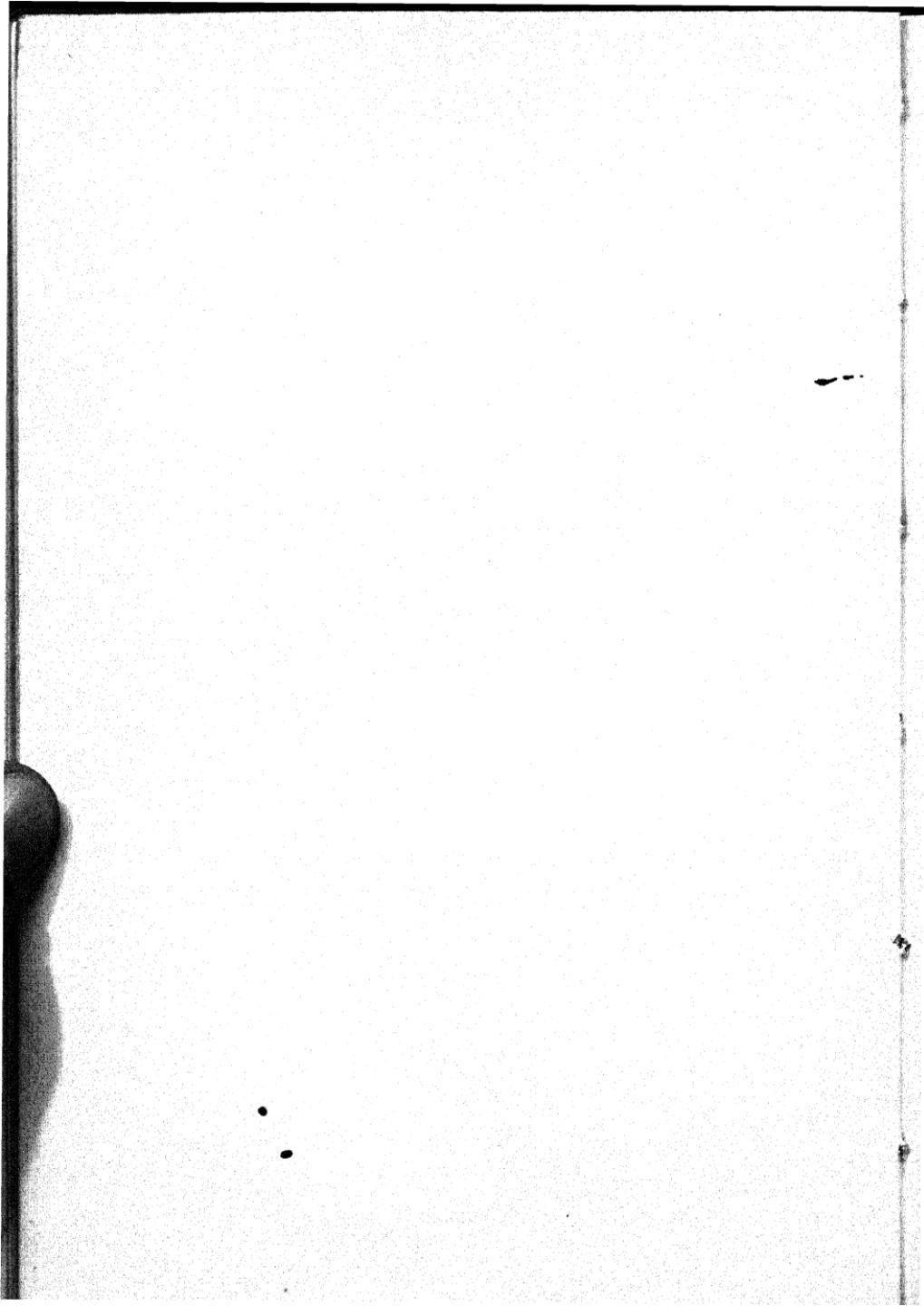
And for he was a king,
The more shameful reckoning
Of him should men report,
In earnest and in sport.
He scantily loveth our king,
That grudgeth at this thing:
That cast such overthwarts²
Perchance have hollow hearts.

*Si veritatem dico, quare non creditis mihi?*³

¹picks a quarrel.

²cavils.

³If I speak truth, why do you not believe me?



MAGNIFICENCE

*A Goodly Interlude and a Merry
Devised and Made by
MAISTER SKELTON, POET LAUREATE*

These be the Names of the Players:

Felicity	Folly
Liberty	Adversity
Measure	Poverty
Magnificence	Despair
Fancy	Mischief
Counterfeit Countenance	Goodhope
Crafty Conveyance	Redress
Cloaked Collusion	Sad Circumspection
Courtly Abusion	Perseverance

Stage I. Scene I. PROSPERITY

Felicity. All thing is contrivéd by man's reason,

The world environéd of high and low estate.

Be it early or late, wealth hath a season.

Wealth is of wisdom the very true probate¹;

A fool is he with wealth that falleth at debate:

But men nowadays so unhappily be vred²

That nothing than wealth may worse be enduréd.

To tell you the cause meseemeth no need.

The amends thereof is far to call again;

For, when men buy wealth, they have little drede

Of that may come after; experience true and plain,

How after a drought there falleth a shower of rain,

¹test.

²disposed.

And after a heat oft cometh a stormy cold.
A man may have wealth, but not as he wold,

Aye to continue and still to endure.

But if prudence be proved with sad circumspection
Wealth might be won and made to the lure,
If nobleness were acquainted with sober direction;
But will hath reason so under subjection,
And so disordereth this world over all,
That wealth and felicity is passing small.

But where wonnēs¹ wealth, an a man would weet?
For Wealthful Felicity truly is my name.

Stage I. Scene 2

Enter LIBERTY

Lib. Mary, Wealth and I was appointed to meet,
And either I am deceived, or ye be the same.

Fel. Sir, as ye say, I have heard of your fame;
Your name is Liberty, as I understand.

Lib. True you say, sir; give me your hand.

Fel. And from whence come ye, an it might be asked?

Lib. To tell you, sir, I dare not, lest I should be masked
In a pair of fetters or a pair of stocks!

Fel. Hear you not how this gentleman mocks?

Lib. Yea, to mocking earnest what an it prove?

Fel. Why, to say what he will Liberty hath leave.

Lib. Yet Liberty hath been lockēd up and kept in the mew.

Fel. Indeed, sir, that liberty was not worth a cue²!

Howbeit, Liberty may sometime be too large,
But if reason be regent and ruler of your barge.

Lib. To that ye say I can well condescend.

Shew foft, I pray you, herein what you intend.

¹dwells.

²half a farthing.

Fel. Of that I intend to make demonstration,
It asketh leisure with good advertence.

First, I say, we ought to have in consideration
That Liberty be linkéd with the chain of continence,
Liberty to let from all manner offence;
For Liberty at large is loath to be stoppéd,
But with continence your corage¹ must be croppéd.

Lib. Then thus to you —

Fel. Nay, suffer me yet further to say
And peradventure I shall content your mind.
Liberty, I wot well, forbear no man there may:
It is so sweet in all manner of kind.
Howbeit, Liberty maketh many a man blind;
By Liberty is done many a great excess;
Liberty at large will oft wax reckless.

Perceive ye this parcel²?

Lib. Yea, sir, passing well.
But an you would me permit
To shew part of my wit,
Somewhat I could infer
Your conceit to debar,
Under supportation
Of patient tolleration.

Fel. God forbid ye should be let³
Your reasons forth to set;
Wherefore at liberty.
Say what ye will to me.

Lib. Briefly to touch of my purpose the effect:
Liberty is laudable and privileged from law;
Judicial rigor shall not me correct —

Fel. Soft, my friend; herein your reason is but raw.

Lib. Yet suffer me to say the surplus of my saw.
What weet ye whereupon I will conclude?
I say there is no wealth whereas Liberty is subdued⁴

¹inclination.

²part.

³i.e. stopped.

I trow ye cannot say nay much to this:
 To live under law it is captivity;
 Where dread leadeth the dance, there is no joy nor bliss.
 Or how can ye prove that there is felicity
 An you have not your own free liberty
 To sport at your pleasure, to run, and to hide?
 Where Liberty is absent set wealth aside!

Stage 1. Scene 3

Here MEASURE comes in

Meas. Christ you assist in your altercation!
Fel. Why, have you heard of our disputation?
Meas. I perceive well how each of you doth reason.
Lib. Maister Measure, you be come in good season.
Meas. And it is wonder that your wild insolence
 Can be content with Measure's presence!

Fel. Would it please you then -
Lib. Us to inform and ken -
Meas. Ah, ye be wondrous men!
 Your language is like the pen
 Of him that writeth too fast!
Fel. Sir, if any word have passed
 Me, either first or last,
 To you I arect it, and cast
 Thereof the reformation.
Lib. And I of the same fashion;
 Howbeit, by protestation
 Displeasure that you none take;
 Some reason we must make.
Meas. That will not I forsake,
 So it in measure be.
 Come off therefore, let see:
 Shall I begin, or ye?
Fel. Nay, ye shall begin, by my will.

Lib. It is reason and skill
We your pleasure fulfill.

Meas. Then ye must both consent
You to hold content
With my argument;
And I must you require
Me patiently to hear.

Fel. Yes, sir, with right good cheer.

Lib. With all my heart entire.

Meas. Horacius to record, in his volumes old,
With every condition measure must be sought.
Wealth without measure would bear himself too bold;
Liberty without measure prove a thing of nought.
I ponder by number; by measure all thing is wrought,
As at the first original, by Godly opinion:
Which proveth well that measure should have dominion.

Where measure is master, plenty doth none offence;

Where measure lacketh, all thing disorderéd is;
Where measure is absent, riot keepeth residence;

Where measure is ruler, there is nothing amiss.

Measure is treasure. How say ye, is it not this?
Fel. Yes, questionless, in mine opinion,
Measure is worthy to have dominion.

Lib. Unto that same I am right well agreed,
So that Liberty be not left behind.

Meas. Yea, Liberty with Measure need never drede.

Lib. What, Liberty to Measure then would ye bind?

Meas. What else? for otherwise it were against kind:
If Liberty should leap and run where he list
It were no virtue, it were a thing unbliss'd.

It were a mischief, if Liberty lacked a rein
Wherewith to rule him with the writhing of a w^rest.¹

¹As on a harp.

All trebles and tenors be ruléd by a mean.

Liberty without Measure is accounted for a beast;

There is no surfeit where Measure ruleth the feast;
There is no excess where Measure hath his health:
Measure continueth prosperity and wealth.

Fel. Unto your rule I will annex my mind.

Lib. So would I, but I would be loath
That wont was to be foremost now to come behind.

It were a shame, to God I make an oath,
Without I might cut it out of the broad clothe,
As I was wont ever, at my free will.

Meas. But have ye not heard say that will is no skill?

Take sad¹ direction, and leave this wantonness.

Lib. It is no mastery!
Fel. Tush, let Measure proceed,
And after his mind hardly² yourself address;
For, without Measure, Poverty and Need
Will creep upon us, and us to Mischief lead:
For Mischief will master us if Measure us forsake.
Lib. Well, I am content your ways to take.

Meas. Surely I am joyous that ye be minded thus.

Magnificence to maintain your promotion shall be.
Fel. So in his heart he may be glad of us.

Lib. There is no prince but he hath need of us three:
Wealth with Measure, and pleasant Libertie.

Meas. Now pleaseth you a little while to stand;
Meseemeth Magnificence is coming here at hand.

Stage 1. Scene 4

Here MAGNIFICENCE comes in

Magn. To assure you of my noble port and fame,
Who list to know, Magnificence I hight.

¹serious.

²firmly.

But Measure, my friend, what hight this man's name?

Meas. Sir, though ye be a noble prince of micht,

Yet in this man you must set your whole delight.

And, sir, this other man's name is Libertie.

Magn. Welcome, friends, ye are both unto me.

But now let me know of your conversation.

Fel. Pleaseth your grace, Felicity they me call.

Lib. And I am Liberty, made in every nation.

Magn. Convenient persons for any prince royll.

Wealth with Liberty, with me both dwell ye shall,
To the guiding of my Measure you both committing,
That Measure be master, us seemeth it is fitting.

Meas. Whereas ye have, sir, to me them assignéd,

Such order I trust with them for to take

That Wealth with Measure shall be combinéd,

And Liberty his large with Measure shall make.

Fel. Your ordinance, sir, I will not forsake.

Lib. And I myself wholly to you will incline.

Magn. Then may I say that ye be servants mine,

For by Measure, I warn you, we think to be guided.

Wherein it is necessary my pleasure you know:

Measure and I will never be divided,

For no discord that any man can sow;

For Measure is a mean, neither too high nor too low,
In whose attemperance I have such delight
That Measure shall never depart from my sight.

Fel. Laudable your conceit is to be accounted,

For Wealth without Measure suddenly will slide.

Lib. As your grace full nobly recounted,

Measure with nobleness should be allied.

Magn. Then, Liberty, see that Measure be your guide,
For I will use you by this advertisement.

Fel. Then shall you have with you Prosperity resident.

Meas. I trow Good Fortune hath annexed us together,
 To see how agreeable we are of one mind;
 There is no flatterer, nor a losel so lither,¹
 This linkéd chain of love that can unbind.
 Now that ye have me chief ruler assigned,
 I will endeavour me to order every thing
 Your nobleness and honour conserving.

Lib. In joy and mirth your mind shall be enlargéd,
 And not embracéd with pusillanimitie:
 But plenarily all thought from you must be discharged,
 If ye list to live after your free Libertie.
 All delectations acquainted is with me.
 By me all persons worké what they list.
Meas. Hem, sir, yet beware of "Had I wist!"

Liberty in some cause becometh a gentle mind,
 By cause of Measure, if I be in the way:
 Who counteth without me is cast too far behind
 Of reckoning, as evidently we may
 See at our eye the worldé day by day.
 For default of Measure all thing doth exceed.
Fel. All that ye say is as true as the Creed.

For howbeit, Liberty to Wealth is convenient,
 And from Felicity may not be forborn,
 Yet Measure hath been so long from us absent
 That all men laugh at Liberty to scorn.
 Wealth and wit, I say, be so thread-bare worn
 That all is without Measure and far beyond the mone.²
Magn. Then nobleness, I see well, it almost undone.

But if thereof the sooner amends be made,
 For doubtless I perceive my magnificence
 Without Measure lightly may fade,
 Of too much Liberty under the offence:
 Wherefore, Measure, take Liberty with you hence,

¹scoundrel so wicked.

²moon.

And rule him after the rule of your school.

Lib. What, sir, would ye make me a popping fool?¹

Meas. Why, were not yourself agreed to the same,

And now would ye swerve from your own ordinance?

Lib. I would be ruléd, an I might for shame!

Fel. Ah, ye make me laugh at your inconstance!

Magn. Sir, without any longer dalliance,

Take Liberty to rule, and follow mine intent.

Meas. It shall be done at your commandment.

[*Exit MEASURE with LIBERTY.*

Stage 1. Scene 5

Magn. It is a wanton thing, this Libertie!

Perceive you not how loth he was to abide
The rule of Measure, notwithstanding we

Have deputed Measure him to guide?

By Measure each thing duly is tried.

Think you not thus, my friend Felicitie?

Fel. God forbid that it otherwise should be!

Magn. Ye could not else, I wot, with me endure.²

Fel. Endure? No, God wot, it were great pain!
But if I were orderéd by just Measure

It were not possible me long to retain.

Stage 1. Scene 6

Enter FANCY

Fan. Tush, hold your peace, your language is vain.
Please it, your grace, to take no disdain,

To shew you plainly the truth as I think.

Magn. Here is none forseth³ whether you float or sink!

¹i.e. like a parrot.

²remain.

³careth.

Fel. From whence come you, sir, that no man lookéd after?

Magn. Or who made you so bold to interrupt my tale?

Fan. Now, *benedicite*, ye ween I were some hafter,¹

Or else some jangling Jack of the Vale;

Ye ween that I am drunken, because I look pale.

Magn. Meseemeth that ye have drunken more than ye have bled.

Fan. Yet among noblemen I was brought up and bred.

Fel. Now leave this jangling and to us expound

Why that ye said our language was in vain.

Fan. Mary, upon a truth my reason I ground,

That without Largesse Nobleness cannot reign:

And that I said once yet I say again.

I say, without Largesse worship hath no place,

For Largesse is a purchaser of pardon and of grace.

Magn. Now, I beseech thee, tell me what is thy name?

Fan. Largesse, that lords should love, sir, I hight.

Fel. But high ye Largesse, increase of noble fame?

Fan. Yea, sir, undoubted.

Fel. Then of very right

With Magnificence, this noble prince of might,
Should be your dwelling, in my consideration.

Magn. Yet we will therein take good deliberation.

Fan. As in that, I will not be against your pleasure.

Fel. Sir, hardly remember what may your name advance.

Magn. Largesse is laudable, so it be in measure.

Fan. Largesse is he that all princes doth advance.

I report me herein to King Lewis of France.²

Fel. Why have ye him named and all other refused?

Fan. For, sith he died, Largesse was little used.

¹some "twister."

²Louis XII.

Pluck up your mind, sir; what ails you to muse?

Have ye not Wealth here at your will?

It is but a madding, these ways that ye use:

What availeth Lordship, yourself for to kill

With care and thought how Jack shall have Jill?

Magn. What? I have espied ye are a careless page.

Fan. By God, sir, ye see but few wise men of mine age!

But Covertise hath blowen you so full of wind

That *colica passio* hath gropéd you by the guts.

Fel. In faith, Brother Largesse, you have a merry mind!

Fan. In faith, I set not by the world two Doncaster cuts¹!

Magn. Ye want but a wild flying bolt to shoot at the butts!

Though Largesse ye hight, your language is too large:

For which end goeth forward ye take little charge!

Fel. Let see, this check if ye void can.

Fan. In faith, else had I gone too long to school,
But if I could know a goose from a swan!

Magn. Well, wise men may eat the fish when ye shall draw the pole.

Fan. In faith, I will not say that ye shall prove a fole,
But oft time have I seen wise men do mad deeds.

Magn. Go shake thee, dog, hey, sith ye will needs!

You are nothing meet with us for to dwell,

That with your lord and master so pertly can prate:
Get you hence, I say, by my counsell;

I will not use you to play with me check-mate!

Fan. Sir, if I have offended your noble estate,
I trow I have brought you such writing of record
That I shall have you again my good lord.

To you recommendeth Sad Circumspection,

And sendeth you this writing closed under seal.

¹nags.

Magn. This writing is welcome with hearty affection.

Why kept you it thus long? How doth he? Weel?

Fan. Sir, thanked be God, he hath his heal.

Magn. Wealth, get you home, and commend me to Measure;
Bid him take good heed to you, my singular treasure.

Fel. Is there anything else your grace will command me?

Magn. Nothing but fare you well till soon;
And that he take good keep of Libertie.

Fel. Your pleasure, sir, shortly shall be doon.

Magn. I shall come to you myself, I trow, this afternoon.

[*Exit FELICITY.*

I pray you, Largesse, here to remain
Whilst I know what this letter doth contain.

Stage 1. Scene 7

As MAGNIFICENCE is reading the letter, COUNTERFEIT COUNTENANCE comes in on tiptoe, humming to himself, but, seeing MAGNIFICENCE, withdraws quietly; then, a little later, he comes back again, hailing FANCY from a safe distance. FANCY motions him to keep quiet.

C. Count. What! Fancy, Fancy!

Magn. Who is that that thus did cry?

Methought he calléd Fancy.

Fan. It was a Fleming hight Hansy.

Magn. Methought he calléd Fancy me behind.

Fan. Nay, sir, it was nothing but your mind.

But now, sir, as touching this letter —

Magn. I shall look in it at leisure better:

And surely ye are to him behold,

And for his sake right gladly I wold

Do what I could to do you good.

Fan. I pray God keep you in that mood!

Magn. This letter was written far hence.

Fan. By lakin,¹ sir, it hath cost me pence
And groats many one, ere I came to your presence!

Magn. Where was it delivered you, shew unto me.

Fan. By God, sir, beyond the sea.

Magn. At what place now, as you guess?

Fan. By my troth, sir, at Pontesse²:

This writing was taken me³ there,

But never was I in greater fear.

Magn. How so?

Fan. By God, at the sea side,

Had I not opened by purse wide

I trow, by our Lady, I had been slain,

Or else I had lost mine ears twain.

Magn. By your sooth?

Fan. Yea, and there is such a watch

That no man can 'scape but they him catch.

They bear me in hand⁴ that I was a spy,

And another bade put out mine eye,

Another would mine eye was bleared,

Another bade shave half my beard;

And boys to the pillory 'gan me pluck,

And would have made me Friar Tuck,

To preach out of the pillory hole

Without an anthem or a stole;

And some bade "Sear him with a mark!"

To get me fro them I had much wark.

Magn. Mary, sir, ye were afraied!

Fan. By my troth, had I not paid and prayed,

And made largesse, as I hight,

I had not been here with you this night;

But surely largesse saved my life,

For largesse stinteth all manner of strife.

Magn. It doth so, sure, now and then;

But largesse is not meet for every man.

¹ladykin (By our Lady).

²Pontoise.

³consigned to me.

⁴accused me.

Fan. No, but for you great estates.
 Largesse stinteth great debates,
 And he that I came fro to this place
 Said I was meet for your grace.
 And indeed, sir, I hear men talk
 By the way, as I ride and walk,
 Say how you exceed in nobleness
 If you had with you Largesse.

Magn. And say they so in very deed?

Fan. With yea, sir, so God me speed.

Magn. Yet Measure is a merry mean.

Fan. Yea, sir, a blanched almond is no bean!

Measure is meet for a merchant's hall,
 But Largesse becometh a state royall.

What, should you pinch at a peck of oats,
 Ye would soon pinch at a peck of groats!

Thus is the talking of one and of other,
 As men dare speak it hugger mugger:
 A lord, a nigard, it is a shame!

But Largesse may amend your name

Magn. In faith, Largesse, welcome to me.

Fan. I pray you, sir, I may so be,
 And of my service you shall not miss.

Magn. Together we will talk more of this:
 Let us depart from hence home to my place.

Fan. I follow even after your noble grace.

[Exit MAGNIFICENCE. COUNTERFEIT COUNTENANCE,
 entering, detains FANCY.]

C. Count. What, I say, hark a word!

Fan. Do away, I say, the devil's turd!

C. Count. Yea, but how long shall I here await?

Fan. By God's body, I come straight!
 I hate this blundering¹ that thou dost make.

[Exit.]

C. Count. Now, to the devil I thee betake,
 For in faith ye be well met!

¹disturbance.

Stage 2. Scene 8. CONSPIRACY

COUNTERFEIT COUNTENANCE *alone in the place*

C. Count. Fancy hath catchéd in a fly-net
 This noble man Magnificence,
 Of Largesse under the pretence.
 They have made me here to put the stone:
 But now will I, that they be gone,
 In bastard time, after the doggerel guise,
 Tell you whereof my name doth rise.

For Counterfeit Countenance known am I,
 This world is full of my folly.

I set not by him a fly
 That cannot counterfeit a lie,
 Swear, and stare, and bide thereby,
 And countenance it cleanly,
 And defend it mannerly.

A knave will counterfeit now a knight,
 A lurdain¹ like a lord to flight,²
 A minstrel like a man of might,
 A tapster³ like a lady bright:
 Thus make I them with thrift to fight,
 Thus at the last I bring him right
 To Tyburn, where they hang on hight.

To counterfeit I can by pretty ways:
 Of nights to occupy counterfeit keys,
 Cleanly to counterfeit new arrays,
 Counterfeit earnest by way of plays:
 Thus am I occupied at all essays.
 Whatsoever I do, all men me praise,
 And mickle am I made of nowadays.

¹vagabond.²scold.³a barmaid.

Counterfeit matters in the law of the land,
With gold and groats they grease my hand
In stead of right that wrong may stand,
And counterfeit freedom that is bound;
I counterfeit sugar that is but found;
Counterfeit captains by me are mann'd;
Of all lewdness I kindle the brand;

Counterfeit kindness, and think deceit;
Counterfeit letters by the way of sleight;
Subtily using counterfeit weight;
Counterfeit language, *fait bon geyt*.¹
Counterfeit is a proper bait;
A count to counterfeit in a reseit,—
To counterfeit well is a good conceit.

Counterfeit maidenhood may well be born,
But counterfeit coins is laughing to scorn;
It is evil patching of that is torn,
When the nap is rough, it would be shorn;
Counterfeit halting without a thorn,
Yet counterfeit chaffer² is but evil corn;
All thing is worse when it is worn.

What would ye, wives, counterfeit
The courtly guise of the new jet?
An old barn would be underset:
It is much worth that is far-fet.
What, wanton, wanton, now well ymet!
What, Margery Milk Duck, marmoset!
It would be maskéd in my net;

It would be nice, though I say nay;
By Crede, it would have fresh array,
And therefore shall my husband pay;

¹i.e. *gesture* - makes a good story. ²merchandise.
³fashion. ⁴far-fetched.

To counterfeit she will essay
 All the new guise, fresh and gay.
 And be as pretty as she may,
 And jet it¹ jolly as a jay.

Counterfeit preaching, and believe the contrary;
 Counterfeit conscience, peevish pope holy;
 Counterfeit sadness,² with dealing full madly;
 Counterfeit holiness is called hypocrisy;
 Counterfeit reason is not worth a fly;
 Counterfeit wisdom, and works of folly;
 Counterfeit countenance every man doth occupy.

Counterfeit worship³ outward men may see;
 Riches rideth out, at home is povertie;
 Counterfeit pleasure is borne out by me:
 Coll would go cleanly, and it will not be,
 And Annot would be nice, and laughs "Tehe wehe!"
 Your counterfeit countenance is all of necessity,
 A pluméd partridge all ready to fly.

A knuckleboneyard will counterfeit a clerk,
 He would trot gently, but he is too stark,
 At his cloaked counterfeiting dogs do bark;
 A carter a courtier, it is a worthy wark,
 That with his whip his mares was wont to yark⁴;
 A coistrell⁵ to drive the devil out of the dark,
 A counterfeit courtier with a knavès mark.

To counterfeit thus friars have learned me;
 Thus nuns now and then, an it might be,
 Would take in the way of counterfeit charitie
 The grace of God under *benedicite*;
 To counterfeit their counsel they give me a fee;
 Canons cannot counterfeit but upon three,
 Monks may not for dread that man should them see.

¹strut.

²sobriety.

³dignity, position.

⁴lash.

⁵groom.

Stage 2. Scene 9

Enter FANCY, talking excitedly to CRAFTY CONVEYANCE

Cr. Con. What, Counterfeit Countenance!

C. Count. What, Crafty Conveyance!

Fan. What, the devil, are ye two of acquaintance?

God give you a very mischance!

Cr. Coun. Yes, yes, sir, he and I have met.

C. Count. We have been together both early and late.

But, Fancy, my friend, where have ye been so long?

Fan. By God, I have been about a pretty prong¹;

Crafty Conveyance, I should say, and I.

Cr. Con. By God, we have made Magnificence to eat a fly!

C. Count. How could ye do that, an I was away?

Fan. By God, man, both his pageant and thine he can play.

C. Count. Say truth?

Cr. Con. Yes, yes, by lakin, I shall thee warrant,

As long as I live, thou hast an heir apparent.

Fan. Yet have we pickéd out a room² for thee.

C. Count. Why, shall we dwell together all three?

Cr. Con. Why, man, it were too great a wonder
That we three gallants should be long assunder.

C. Count. For Cock's³ heart, give me thy hand!

Fan. By the mass, for ye are able to destroy an whole land!

Cr. Con. By God, yet it must begin much of thee.

Fan. Who that is ruled by us it shall be long ere he three.⁴

C. Count. But, I say, keepest thou the old name still that
thou had?

Cr. Con. Why wendest thou, whoreson, that I were so mad?

Fan. Nay, nay, he hath changéd his, and I have changéd mine.

C. Count. Now, what is his name, and what is thine?

Fan. In faith, Largesse I hight.

And I am made a knight.

C. Count. A rebellion against nature,
So large a man, and so little of stature!

¹prank.

²i.e. a place.

³i.e. God's.

⁴thrive.

But, sir, how counterfeited ye?

Cr. Con. Sure Surveyance I naméd me.

C. Count. Surveyance! where ye survey
Thrift hath lost her coffer-key!

Fan. But is it not well? how thinkest thou?

C. Count. Yes, sir, I give God a vow,
Myself could not counterfeit it better.

But what became of the letter

That I counterfeited you underneath a shroud?

Fan. By the mass, oddly well allowed.

Cr. Con. By God, had not I it conveyéd
Fancy had been discrivéd.¹

C. Count. I wot, thou art false enough for one.

Fan. By my troth, we had been gone:

And yet, in faith, man, we lackéd thee
For to speak with Libertie.

C. Count. What is Largesse without Libertie?

Cr. Con. By Measure mastered yet is he.

C. Count. What, is your conveyance no better?

Fan. In faith, Measure is like a tetter²

That overgroweth a man's face,
So he ruleth over all our place.

Cr. Con. Now therefore, whilst we are together, —

Counterfeit Countenance, nay, come hither, —

I say, whilst we are together in same —

C. Count. Tush, a straw, it is a shame
Than we can no better than so.

Fan. We will remedy it, man, ere we go:

For, like as mustard is sharp of taste,
Right so a sharp fancy must be found

Wherewith Measure to confound.

Cr. Con. Con you a remedy for a tisic,³

That sheweth yourself thus sped in physic?

C. Count. It is a gentle reason of a rake!

Fan. For all these japes yet that ye make —

Cr. Con. Your fancy maketh mine elbow to•ache!

¹discovered.

²a skin disease.

³phthisis.

Fan. Let see, find you a better way.

C. Count. Take no displeasure of what we say.

Cr. Con. Nay, an you be angry and overwrought,
A man may beshrew your angry heart.

Fan. Tush, a straw, I thought no ill.

C. Count. What, shall we jangle thus all the day still?

Cr. Con. Nay, let us our heads together cast.

Fan. Yea, and see how it may be compassed
That Measure were cast out of the doors.

C. Count. Alas, where is my boots and my spurs?

Cr. Con. In all this haste whither will ye ride?

C. Count. I trow, it shall not need to abide.

Cock's wounds, see, sirs, see, see!

Stage 2. Scene 10

*Enter CLOAKED COLLUSION, pacing up and down
with a grand air*

Fan. Cock's arms, what is he?

Cr. Con. By Cock's heart, he looketh high!
He hawketh, methink, for a butterfly.

C. Count. Now, by Cock's heart, well abidden,
For, had you not come, I had ridden.

Cl. Col. Thy words be but wind, never they have no weight;
Thou hast made me play the jurd hayt.

C. Count. And if ye knew how I have mused
I am sure ye would have me excused.

Cl. Col. I say, come hither: what are these twain?

C. Count. By God, sir, this is Fancy small brain,
And Crafty Conveyance, know you not him?

Cl. Col. "Know him, sir!" quod he: yes, by Saint Sim!
Here is a leash of ratches¹ to run a hare:

Woe is that purse that ye shall share!

Fan. What call ye him - this?

¹hounds.

Cr. Con. I trow what he is —

C. Count. Tush, hold your peace.

See you not how they press

For to know your name?

Cl. Col. Know they not me, they are to blame.

Know you not me, sirs?

Fan. No, indeed.

Cr. Con. Abide, let me see, take better heed;

Cock's heart, it is Cloaked Collusion!

Cl. Col. Ay, sir, I pray God give you confusion!

Fan. Cock's arms, is that your name?

C. Count. Yea, by the mass, this is even the same,
That all this matter must under grope.¹

Cr. Con. What is this he weareth — a cope?

Cl. Col. Cap, sir! I say you be too bold.

Fan. See how he is wrappéd for the cold:
Is it not a vestment?

Cl. Col. Ah, ye want a rope!

C. Count. Tush, it is Sir John Double-Cope.

Fan. Sir, an if you would not be wroth —

Cl. Col. What say'st?

Fan. Here was too little cloth!

Cl. Col. Ah, Fancy, Fancy, God send thee brain!

Fan. Yea, for your wit is cloakéd for the rain.

Cr. Con. Nay, let us not chatter thus still.

Cl. Col. Tell me, sirs, what is your will.

C. Count. Sir, it is so that these twain
With Magnificence in household do remain,
And there they would have me to dwell,
But I will be ruled after your counsell.

Fan. Mary, so will we also.

Cl. Col. But tell me whereabout ye go.

C. Count. By God, we would get us all thither
Spell the remnant, and do together.²

Cl. Col. Hath Magnificence any treasure?

Cr. Con. Yea, but he spendeth it all in measure.

¹seize, understand.

²i.e. put it together.

MAGNIFICENCE

Cl. Col. Why, dwelleth Measure where ye two dwell?
In faith, he were better to dwell in hell!

Fan. Yet where we wonne,¹ now there wonneth he.

Cl. Col. And have you not among you Libertie.

C. Count. Yea, but he is in captivitie.

Cl. Col. What the devil! how may that be?

C. Count. I cannot tell you: why ask you me?
Ask these two that there doth dwell.

Cl. Col. Sir, the plainness² you me tell.

Cr. Con. There dwelleth a master men calleth Measure -

Fan. Yea, and he hath rule of all his treasure.

Cr. Con. Nay, either let me tell, or else tell ye.

Fan. I care not, tell on for me.

C. Count. I pray God let you never to three³!

Cl. Col. What the devil aileth you? can you not agree?

Cr. Con. I will pass over the circumstance

And shortly shew you the whole substance.

Fancy and I, we twain,

With Magnificence in household do remain,

And counterfeited our names we have

Craftily all things upright to save,

His name Largesse, Surveyance mine:

Magnificence to us beginneth to incline

Counterfeit Countenance to have also,

And would that we should for him go.

C. Count. But shall I have mine old name still?

Cr. Con. Peace, I have not yet said what I will.

Fan. Here is a 'pistle of a postic!

Cl. Col. Tush, fonnish Fancy, thou art frantic!

Tell on, sir - how then?

Cr. Con. Mary, sir, he told us when

We had him found we should him bring,

And that we failed not for nothing.

Cl. Col. All this ye may easily bring about.

Fan. Mary, the better an Measure were out.

Cl. Col. Why, can ye not put out that foul freke⁴?

¹dwell.

²the plain fact.

³thrive.

⁴fellow.

Cr. Con. No, in every corner he will peke,
 So that we have no libertie,
 Nor no man in court but he,
 For Liberty he hath in guiding.

C. Count. In faith, and without Liberty there is no biding.

Fan. In faith, and Liberty's room is there but small.

Cl. Col. Hem! that like I nothing at all.

Cr. Con. But, Counterfeit Countenance, go we together,
 All three, I say.

C. Count. Shall I go? whither?

Cr. Con. To Magnificence with us twain,
 And in his service thee to retain.

C. Count. But then, sir, what shall I hight?

Cr. Con. Ye and I talkéd thereof to-night.

Fan. Yea, my fancy was out of owl-flight,
 For it is out of my mindē quite.

Cr. Con. And now it cometh to my remembrance:
 Sir, ye shall hight Good Demeanance.

C. Count. By the arms of Calais, well conceived!

Cr. Con. When we have him thither conveyed,
 What an I frame such a sleight

That Fancy with his fond conceit

Put Magnificence in such a madness

That he shall have you in the stead of sadness,

And Sober Sadness shall be your name!

Cl. Col. By Cock's body, here beginneth the game!

For then shall we so craftily carry

That Measure shall not there long tarry.

Fan. For Cock's heart, tarry whilst that I come again.

Cr. Con. We will see you shortly one of us again.

C. Count. Now let us go, an we shall, then.

Cl. Col. Now let us see acquit you like pretty men.

[*Exit FANCY, CRAFTY CONVEYANCE and
 COUNTERFEIT COUNTENANCE.*

Stage 2. Scene 11

Here Cloaked Collusion promenades

Cl. Col. To pass the time and order while a man may talk
 Of one thing and other to occupy the place;
 Then for the season that I here shall walk,
 As good to be occupied as up and down to trace
 And do nothing. Howbeit, full little grace
 There cometh and growtheth of my coming,
 For Cloaked Collusion is a perilous thing.

Double dealing and I be all one,
 Crafting and hafting contrived is by me;
 I can dissemble, I can both laugh and groane,
 Plain dealing and I can never agree:
 But division, dissension, derision, these three
 And I am counterfeit of one mind and thought,
 By the means of mischief to bring all things to nought.

And though I be so odious a guest,
 And every man gladly my company would refuse,
 In faith yet am I occupié with the best:
 Full few that can themselves of me excuse.
 When other men laugh, then study I and muse,
 Devising the means and ways that I can,
 How I may hurt and hinder every man.

Two faces in a hood covertly I bear,
 Water in the one hand, and fire in the other;
 I can feed forth a fool, and lead him by the ear:
 Falsehood-in-Fellowship is my sworn brother.
 By Cloaked Collusion, I say, and none other,
 Cumberance and trouble in England first began:
 From that lord to that lord I rode and I ran,

And flattered them with fables fair before their face,
 And told all the mischief I could behind their back,

And made as I had knownen nothing of the case:

I would begin all mischief, but I would bear no lack.¹

Thus can I learn you, sirs, to bear the devil's sack.

And yet, I trow, some of you be better sped than I

Friendship to feign, and think full litherly.²

Paint³ to a purpose good countenance I can,

And craftily can I grope how every man is minded;

My purpose is to spy and to point every man;

My tongue is with favell⁴ forked and tynéd⁵:

By Cloaked Collusion thus many one is beguiléd.

Each man to hinder I gape and I gasp:

My speech is all pleasure, but I sting like a wasp.

I am never glad but when I may do ill,

And never am I sorry but when that I see

I cannot mine appetite accomplish and fulfil

In hinderance of wealth and prosperitie:

I laugh at all shrewdness, and lie at libertie.

I muster, I meddle; among these great estates

I sow seditious seeds of dischord and debates.

To flatter and to fleer is all my pretence

Among all such persons as I well understand

Be light of belief and hasty of credence;

I make them to startle and sparkle like a brond,

I move them, I maze them, I make them so fond

That they will hear no man but the first tale:

And so by these means I brew much bale.⁶

Stage 2. Scene 12

Enter COURTY ABUSION, singing

Court. Ab. Huffa, huffa, tanderum, tanderum, tain, huffa,
huffa!

Ct. Col. This was properly prated, sirs! what said *a?*⁷

¹blame. ²wickedly. ³feign. ⁴cajolery.

⁵pointed. ⁶trouble. ⁷he.

Court. Ab. Rutty bully, jolly rutterkin, heyda!
Cl. Col. De que pays êtes vous?

[With an ironical air he makes as if to doff his hat.]

Court. Ab. Deck your hoft and cover a lowne.
Cl. Col. Say vous¹ chanter, "Ventre tres douce"?"
Court. Ab. Oui-da, oui-da.²
 How say'st thou, man, am not I a jolly rutter³?
Cl. Col. Give this gentleman room, sirs, stand utter⁴!
 By God, sir, what need all this waste?
 What is this, a betill, or a botow,⁵ or a buskin lacéd?
Court. Ab. What, wendest thou that I know thee not,
 Cloaked Collusion?
Cl. Col. And wendest thou that I know not thee, cankered
 Abusion?
Court. Ab. Cankered Jack Hare, look thou be not rusty,⁶
 For thou shalt well know I am neither dirty nor dusty!
Cl. Col. Dusty! nay, sir, ye be all of the lusty,
 Howbeit of scape thrift your cloaks smelleth musty.
 But whither art thou walking, in faith unfeignéd?
Court. Ab. Mary, with Magnificence I would be retainéd.
Cl. Col. By the mass, for the court thou art a meet man:
 Thy slippers they swop it, yet thou footest it like a swan.
Court. Ab. Yea, so I can devise my gear after the courtly
 manner.
Cl. Col. So thou art personable to bear a prince's banner.
Court. Ab. By God's foot, and I dare well fight, for I will not
 start.
Cl. Col. Nay, thou art a man good enough – but for thy
 false heart.
Court. Ab. Well, an I be a coward, there is more than I.
Cl. Col. Yea, in faith a bold man and a hardy:
 A bold man in bowl of new ale in corns!
Court. Ab. Will ye see this gentleman is all in his scorns?
Cl. Col. But are ye not advised to dwell where ye spake?

¹i.e. Saviez-vous.

²Yes, indeed.

³dashing fellow.

⁴i.e. stand back.

⁵boot.

⁶uncivil.

Court. Ab. I am of few words, I love not to bark.
 Bearest thou any room, or canst thou do ought?
 Canst thou help me, in favour that I might be brought?
Cl. Col. I may do somewhat, and more I think shall.

Stage 2. Scene 13

Enter CRAFTY CONVEYING, pointing with his finger

Cr. Con. Hem, Collusion!

Court. Ab. By Cock's heart, who is yonder that for thee
 doth call?

Cr. Con. Nay, come at once, for the armes of the dice!

Court. Ab. Cock's arms, he hath calléd for thee twice!

Cl. Col. By Cock's heart, and call shall again:
 To come to me, I trow, he shall be fain.

Court. Ab. What, is thy heart prickéd with such a proud pin?

Cl. Col. Tush, he that hath need, man, let him run.

Cr. Con. Nay, come away, man: thou playest the kayser.

Cl. Col. By the mass, thou shalt bide my leisure.

Cr. Con. "Abide, sir," quod he! mary, so I do.

Court. Ab. He will come, man, when he may tend¹ to.

Cr. Con. What the devil, who sent for thee?

Cl. Col. Here he is now, man; may'st thou not see?

Cr. Con. What the devil, man, what thou meanest?

Art thou so angry as thou seemest?

Court. Ab. What the devil, can ye agree no better?

Cr. Con. What the devil, where had we this jolly jetter?

Cl. Col. What say'st thou, man? why dost thou not supplie,
 And desire me thy good master to be?

Court. Ab. Speakest thou to me?

Cl. Col. Yea, so I tell thee.

Court. Ab. Cock's bones, I ne tell can
 Which of you is the better man,
 Or which of you can do most.

Cr. Con. In faith, I rule much of the rost.

¹attend.

Cl. Col. Rule the roost! thou wouldest, ye?
As scant thou had no need of me.

Cr. Con. Need! yes, mary, I say not nay.

Court. Ab. Cock's heart, I trow thou wilt make a fray!

Cr. Con. Nay, in good faith, it is but the guise.¹

Cl. Col. No, for ere we strike, we will be advised twice.

Court. Ab. What the devil, use ye not to draw no swords?

Cr. Con. No, by my troth, but crack great words.

Court. Ab. Why, is this the guise now-a-days?

Cl. Col. Yea, for surely — oft peace is taken for frays.

But, sir, I will have this man with me.

Cr. Con. Convey yourself first, let see.

Cl. Col. Well, tarry here till I for you send.

Cr. Con. Why, shall he be of your bend²?

Cl. Col. Tarry here: wot ye well what I say?

Court. Ab. I warrant you, I will not go away.

Cr. Con. By Saint Mary, he is a tall³ man.

Cl. Col. Yea, and do right good service he can.

I know in him no defaut,

But that the whoreson is proud and haut.

[Exit CLOAKED COLLUSION and CRAFTY CONVEYANCE.]

Court. Ab. Nay, purchace ye a pardon for the pose,⁴
For pride hath plucked thee by the nose,
As well as me. I would, an I durst —
But now I will not say the worst.

Stage 2. Scene 14

COURTLY ABUSION alone in the place

Court. Ab. What now, let see,
Who looketh on me
Well round about,
How gay and how stout
That I can wear
Courtly my gear.

¹fashion.

²band.

³bold.

⁴catarrh.

My hair brusheth
So pleasantly,
My robe ruseth
So ruttingly,¹
Meseem I fly,
I am so light
To dance delight.

Properly² dressed,
All point devise,
My person pressed
Beyond all size
Of the new guise,
To rush it out
In every rout.

Beyond measure
My sleeve is wide,
All of pleasure
My hose strait tied,
My buskin wide
Rich to behold,
Glittering in gold.

Abusion,
Forsooth, I hight;
Confusion
Shall on him light,
By day or by night,
That useth me:
He cannot three.³

A very fon,⁴
A very ass,
Will take upon
To compass
That never was

¹dashingly.

²handsomely.

³thrive.

⁴fool.

MAGNIFICENCE

Abuséd before;
A very pore

That so will do,
He doth abuse
Himself too too,
He doth misuse
Each man take a fee.¹
To crake and prate:
I befool his pate.

This new fon jet²
From out of France
First I did set,
Made purveyance
And such ordinance
That all men it found
Throughout England.

All this nation
I set on fire
In my fashion,
This their desire,
This new attire:
This ladies have,
I it them gave.

Spare for no cost:
And yet in deed
It is cost lost,
Much more than need
For to exceed
In such array:
Howbeit, I say,

¹Some corruption in text here.

²vaunt. ³foolish fashion.

A carl's¹ son,
 Brought up of nought,
 With me will wonn²
 Whilst he hath ought:
 He will have wrought
 His gown so wide
 That he may hide

His dame and his sire
 Within his sleeve;
 Spend all his hire
 That men him give.
 Wherefore I preve
 A Tyburn check³
 Shall break his neck.

Enter FANCY

Fan. Stow, stow!

Court. Ab. All is out of harre,⁴
 And out of trace,
 Aye warre and warres⁵
 In every place.

Stage 2. Scene 15

But what the devil art thou,
 That criest "Stow, stow!"

Fan. What, whom have we here – Jenkin Joly?

Now welcome, by the God holy!

Court. Ab. What, Fancy, friend! how dost thou fare?

Fan. By Christ, as merry as a March hare!

Court. Ab. What the devil hast thou on thy fist – an owl?

Fan. Nay, it is a farly⁶ fowl.

¹churl's.

²dwell.

³i.e. a rope.

⁴out of joint.

⁵worse and worse.

⁶strange.

Court. Ab. Methink she frowneth and looketh sour.

Fan. Turd, man, it is an hawk of the tower;
She is made for the malard fat.

Court. Ab. Methink she is well-beaked to catch a rat.
But now what tidings can you tell, let see.

Fan. Mary, I am come for thee.

Court. Ab. For me?

Fan. Yea, for thee, so I say.

Court. Ab. How so? tell me, I thee pray.

Fan. Why, heard you not of the fray
That fell among us this same day?

Court. Ab. No, mary, not yet.

Fan. What the devil, never a whit?

Court. Ab. No, by the mass; what should I swear?

Fan. In faith, Liberty is now a lusty spere.¹

Court. Ab. Why, under whom was he abiding?

Fan. Mary, Measure had him a while in guiding,
Till, as the devil would, they fell a-chiding
With Crafty Conveyance.

Court. Ab. Yea, did they so?

Fan. Yea, by God's sacrament, and with other mo.

Court. Ab. What needed that, in the devil's date?

Fan. Yes, yes, he fell with me also at debate.

Court. Ab. With thee also? what, he playeth the state?

Fan. Yea, but I bade him pick out of the gate,
By God's body, so did I!

Court. Ab. By the mass, well done, and boldly!

Fan. Hold thy peace, Measure shall from us walk.

Court. Ab. Why, is he crossed then with a chalk?

Fan. Crossed! yea, checked out of conceit.²

Court. Ab. How so?

Fan. By God, by a pretty sleight,
As hereafter thou shalt know more.

But I must tarry here, go thou before.

Court. Ab. With whom shall I there meet?

Fan. Crafty Conveyance standeth in the street,

• ¹stripling.

²out of favour.

Even of purpose for the same.

Court. Ab. Yea, but what shall I call my name?

Fan. Cock's heart, turn thee, let me see thine array
Cock's bones, this is all of John de Gay!

Court. Ab. So I am 'pointed after my conceit.

Fan. Mary, thou jettest it of height¹!

Court. Ab. Yea, but of my name let us be wise.

Fan. Mary, Lusty Pleasure, by mine advise,
To name thyself. Come off, it were done.

Court. Ab. Farewell, my friend.

Fan. Adieu, till sone.

[Exit COURTY ABUSION.

Stage 2. Scene 16

Fan. Stow, bird, stow, stow!

It is best I feed my hawk now.

There is many evil favoured, an thou be foul.

Each thing is fair when it is young: all hail, owl!

Lo, this is
My fancy ywis:
Now Christ it blesse!
It is, by Jesse,

A bird full sweet,
For me full meet:
She is furred for the heat
All to the feet;

Her browēs bent,
Her eyen glent²:
From Tyne to Trent,
From Stroud to Kent,

¹struttest it in high style.

²glancing.

MAGNIFICENCE

A man shall find
Many of her kind.
How standeth the wind –
Before or behind?

Barbéd¹ like a nun,
For burning of the sun;
Her feathers dun,
Well-favoured, bonne!

Now, let me see about
In all this rout
If I can find out
So seemly a snout

Among this press:
Even a whole mess² –
Peace, man, Peace!
I rede³ we cease.

So farly fair as it looks,
And her beak so comely crooks,
Her nailēs sharp as tenter hooks!
I have not kept her yet three wooks.⁴

And how still she doth sit!
Tewit, tewit! Where is my wit?
The devil speed whit!

That was before, I set behind:
Now too courteous, forthwith unkind,
Sometime too sober, sometime too sad,
Sometime too merry, sometime too mad;
Sometime I sit as I were solemn proud,
Sometime I laugh over lowd,
Sometime I weep for a gee gaw,
Sometime I laugh at wagging of a straw;

¹hooded.

²set.

³I advise.

⁴weeks.

With a pear my love you may win,
 And ye may lose it for a pin.
 I have a thing for to say,
 And I may tend thereto for play;
 But in faith I am so occupied
 On this half and on every side,
 That I wot not where I may rest,
 First to tell you what were best,
 Frantic Fancy-service I hight:
 My wits be weak, my brains are light.
 For it is I that other while
 Pluck down lead, and thatch with tile;
 Now will I this, and now will I that,
 Make a windmill of a mat;
 Now I would, and I wist not what.
 Where is my cap? I have lost my hat!
 And within an hour after
 Pluck down a house, and set up a rafter.
 Hither and thither, I wot not whither:
 Do and undo, both together.
 Of a spindle I will make a spar:
 All that I make forthwith I mar!
 I blunder, I bluster, I blow, and I blother,
 I make on the one day, and I mar on the other.
 Busy, busy, and ever busy,
 I dance up and down till I am dizzy.
 I can find fantasies where none is:
 I will not have it so, I will have it this.¹

Stage 2. Scene 17

*Enter FOLLY, shaking his bauble, capering about,
 and playing on an instrument*

Fol. Masters, Christ save everyone!
 What, Fancy, art thou here alone?

i.e. thus.

Fan. What, fonnish Folly! I befool thy face!

Fol. What, frantic Fancy in a fool's case?

What is this, an owl or a glede?

By my troth, she hath a great head!

Fan. Tush, thy lips hang in thine eye!

It is a French butterfly.

Fol. By my troth, I trow well!

But she is less a great deal

Than a butterfly of our land.

Fan. What pilde³ cur leadest thou in thy hand?

Fol. A pilde cur!

Fan. Yea so, I tell thee, a pilde cur!

Fol. Yet I sold his skin to Mackmur

In the stead of a budge⁴ fur.

Fan. What, flayest thou his skin every year?

Fol. Yes, in faith, I thank God I may hear.

Fan. What, thou wilt cough me a daw for forty pence?

Fol. Mary, sir, Cockermouth is a good way hence.

Fan. What⁵ of Cockermouth spake I no word.

Fol. By my faith, sir, the frubisher hath my sword.

Fan. Ay, I trow ye shall cough me a fool.

Fol. In faith, truth ye say; we went together to school.

Fan. Yea, but I con somewhat more of the letter.

Fol. I will not give a halfpenny for to chose the better.

Fan. But, brother Folly, I wonder much of one thing,
That thou so high from me doth spring,

And I so little alway still.

Fol. By God, I can tell, an I will.

Thou art so feeble fantastical,

And so brainsick therewithal,

And thy wit wandering here and there,

That thou canst not grow out of thy boy's gear.

And as for me, I take but one foolish way,

And therefore I grow more on one day

Than thou can in yearés seven.

Fan. In faith, truth thou sayest now, by God of heaven!

¹habit.

²kite.

³mangy.

⁴lamb's.

For so with fantasies my wit doth fleet,
That wisdom and I shall seldom meet.

Now, of good fellowship, let me buy thy dog.

Fol. Cock's heart, thou liest, I am no hog!

Fan. Here is no man that calléd thee hog nor swine.

Fol. In faith, man, my brain is as good as thine.

Fan. The devil's turd for thy brain!

Fol. By my sire's soul, I feel no rain.

Fan. By the mass, I hold thee mad.

Fol. Mary, I knew thee when thou wast a lad.

Fan. Cock's bones, heard ye ever such another?

Fol. Yea, a fool the one, and a fool the other.

Fan. Nay, but wotest thou what I do say?

Fol. Why, sayest thou that I was here yesterday?

Fan. Cock's arms, this is a work, I trow!

Fol. What, callest thou me a dunnish crow?

Fan. Now, in good faith, thou art a fond guest.

Fol. Yea, bear me this straw to a daw's nest.

Fan. What, wendest thou that I were so foolish and so fond?

Fol. In faith, yet is there none in all Englond.

Fan. Yet for my fancy's sake, I say,

Let me have thy dog, whatsoever I pay.

Fol. Thou shalt have my purse, and I will have thine.

Fan. By my troth, there is mine.

Fol. Now, by my troth, man, take, there is my purse.

And I besrew him that hath the worse.

Fan. Turd, I say, what have I do?

Here is nothing but the buckle of a shoe,

And in my purse was twenty mark.

Fol. Ha, ha, ha! hark, sirs, hark!

For all that my name hight Folly,

By the mass, yet art thou more fool than I.

Fan. Yet give me thy dog, and I am content,

And thou shalt have my hawk to a botchment.

Fol. That ever thou thrive, God it forfend¹!

For God's cope thou wilt spend.

¹forbid.

Now take thou my dog, and give me thy fowl.
Fan. Hey, chish, come hither!
Fol. Nay, turd, take him by time.
Fan. What callest thou thy dog?
Fol. Tush, his name is Grime.
Fan. Come, Grime, come, Grime. It is my pretty dogs!
Fol. In faith, there is not a better dog for hogs,
 Not from Anwick unto Aungey.
Fan. Yea, but trowest thou that he be not mangy?
Fol. No, by my troth, it is but the scurf and the scab.
Fan. What, he hath been hurt with a stab?
Fol. Nay, in faith, it was but a stripe
 That the whoreson had for eating of a tripe.
Fan. Where the devil gat he all these hurts?
Fol. By God, for snatching of puddings¹ and worts.²
Fan. What, then he is some good poor man's cur?
Fol. Yea, but he will in at every man door.
Fan. Now thou hast done me a pleasure great.
Fol. In faith, I would thou had'st a marmoset.
Fan. Cock's heart, I love such japes!
Fol. Yea, for all thy mind is on owls and apes.
 But I have thy poultry, and thou hast my cattle.
Fan. Yea, but thrift and we have made a battle.
Fol. Rememb'rest thou not the japes and the toys –
Fan. What, that we used when we were boys?
Fol. Yea, by the rood, even the same.
Fan. Yes, yes, I am yet as full of game
 As ever I was, and as full of trifles,
*Nil, nihilum, nihil anglice, nifles.*³
Fol. What connest thou all this Latin yet,
 And hath so mazed a wandering wit?
Fan. Tush, man, I keep some Latin in store.
Fol. By Cock's heart, I ween thou hast no more!
Fan. No? yes, in faith, I can versify.
Fol. Then I pray thee heartily
 Make a verse of my butterfly:

¹i.e. meat-puddings.

²vegetables.

³trifles, also.

It forceth not¹ of the reason, so it keep rime.

Fan. But wilt thou make another on Grime?

Fol. Nay, in faith, first let me hear thine.

Fan. Mary, as for that thou shalt soon hear mine:

Est snavi snago with a shrewd face *vilis imago*.

Fol. Grimbaldus greedy, snatch a pudding till the roast be ready.

Fan. By the heart of God, well done!

Fol. Yea, so readily and so sone²!

Stage 2. Scene 18

Enter CRAFTY CONVEYANCE

Cr. Con. What, Fancy! Let me see who is the other.

Fan. By God, sir, Folly, mine own sworn brother!

Cr. Con. Cock's bones, it is a farly freke³:

Can he play well at the hodipeke⁴?

Fan. Tell by thy troth what sport canst thou make.

Fol. Ah, hold thy peace: I have the tooth-ache.

Cr. Con. The tooth-ache! lo, a turd ye have!

Fol. Yea, thou hast the four quarters of a knave.

Cr. Con. Wotest thou, I say, to whom thou speaks?

Fan. Nay, by Cock's heart, he ne recks,⁵

For he will speak to Magnificence thus.

Cr. Con. Cock's arms, a meet man for us!

Fol. What, would ye have more fools, and are so many?

Fan. Nay, offer him a counter in stead of a penny.

Cr. Con. Why, thinkest thou he can no better skill?

Fol. In faith, I can make ye both fools, an I will.

Cr. Con. What hast thou on thy fist – a kesteril?

Fol. Nay, ywis, fool, it is a doteril.

Cr. Con. In a coat thou can play well the diser.⁶

¹matters not.

²soon.

³strange fellow.

⁴fool.

⁵reck not.

⁶scoffer.

Fol. Yea, but thou can play the fool without a viser.

Fan. How rode he by you? how put he you there?

Cr. Con. Mary, as thou sayest, he gave me a blur.

But where gat you that mangy cur?

Fan. Mary, it was his, and now it is mine.

Cr. Con. And was it his, and now it is thine?

Thou must have thy fancy and thy will,

But yet thou shalt hold me a fool still.

Fol. Why, wendest thou that I cannot make thee play the
fon?¹

Fan. Yes, by my faith, good Sir John.

Cr. Con. For you both it were enough.

Fol. Why, wendest thou that I were as much a fool as
thou?

Fan. Nay, nay, thou shalt find him another manner of man.

Fol. In faith, I can do masteries,² so I can.

Cr. Con. What canst thou do but play cock wat?

Fan. Yes, yes, he will make thee eat a gnat.

Fol. Yes, yes, by my troth, I hold thee a groat

That I shall laugh thee out of thy coat.

Cr. Con. Then will I say that thou hast no peer.

Fan. Now, by the rood, and he will go near.

Fol. Hem, Fancy, *regardez vous.*

[*Here FOLLY maketh semblance to take a louse from CRAFTY CONVEYANCE'S shoulder.*

Fan. What hast thou found there?

Fol. By God, a louse.

Cr. Con. By Cock's heart, I trow thou liest.

Fol. By the mass, a Spanish moth with a gray list.

Fan. Ha ha ha ha ha!

Cr. Con. Cock's arms, it is not so, I trow.

[*Here CRAFTY CONVEYANCE putteth off his gown.*

Fol. Put on thy gown again, for thou hast lost now.

¹fool.

²clever tricks.

Fan. Lo, John of Boham,¹ where is thy brain?
Now put on, fool, thy coat again.

Fol. Give me my groat, for thou hast lost.

[*Here FOLLY maketh semblance to take money of
CRAFTY CONVEYANCE.*

Shut thy purse, daw, and do no cost.

Fan. Now hast thou not a proud mock and a stark?

Cr. Con. With, yes, by the rood of Woodstock Park!

Fan. Nay, I tell thee, he maketh no doubts
To turn a fool out of his clouts.²

Cr. Con. And for a fool a man would him take.

Fol. Nay, it is I that fools can make:

For be he kayser or be he king,
To fellowship with Folly I can him bring.

Fan. Nay, wilt thou hear now of his schools,
And what manner of people he maketh fools?

Cr. Con. Yea, let us hear a word or twain.

Fol. Sir, of my manner I shall tell you the plain.

First I lay before them my bible,³

And teach them how they should sit idle,

To pick their fingers all day long;

So in their ear I sing them a song

And make them so long to muse

That some of them runneth straight to the stews⁴:

To theft and bribery I make some fall,

And pick a lock and climb a wall;

And where I spy a nisot⁵ gay,

That will sit idle all the day,

And cannot set herself to wark,

I kindle in her such a lither⁶ spark

That rubbed she must be on the gall

Between the tappet⁷ and the wall.

Cr. Con. What, whoreson, art thou such a one?

¹one of the persons in the old metrical tale, *The Hunting of the Hare.*

²clothes.

³Or, bauble(?).

⁴i.e. brothel.

⁵lazy jade.

⁶wicked.

⁷tapestry.

Fan. Nay, beyond all other set him alone.

Cr. Con. Hast thou any more? Let see, proceed.

Fol. Yea, by God, sir, for a need

I have another manner of sort

That I laugh at for my disport;

And those be they that come up of nought,

As some be not far, an if it were well sought:

Such daws, whatsoever they be

That be set in authoritie,

Anon he waxeth so high and proud,

He frowneth fiercely, brimly browed,

The knave would make it coy,¹ an he could;

All that he doth must be allowed,

And, "This is not well done, sir, take heed!"

And maketh himself busy where is no need:

He dances so long, hey, trolly lolly,

That every man laugheth at his folly.

Cr. Con. By the good Lord, truth he saith!

Fan. Thinkest thou not so, by thy faith?

Cr. Con. "Think I not so!" quod he. Else have I shame,
For I know divers that useth the same.

Fol. But now, forsooth, man, it maketh no matter,
For they will so busily smatter,

So help me God, man, ever at the length

I make them lose much of their strength;

For with folly so do I them lead,

That wit he wanteth when he hath most need.

Fan. Forsooth, tell on: hast thou any mo?

Fol. Yes, I shall tell you, ere I go,
Of divers mo that haunteth my schools.

Cr. Con. All men beware of such fools!

Fol. There be two lither, rude and rank,
Simkin Titivell and Pierce Pythank;

These lithers I learn them for to lere²

What he saith and she saith to lay good ear,

And tell to his sovereign every whit,

¹haughty.

²know.

And then he is much made of for his wit.
 And, be the matter ill more or less,
 He will make it mickle worse than it is:
 But all that he doth, and if he reckon well,
 It is but folly every dell.

Fan. Are not his words cursedly couchéd?

Cr. Con. By God, there be some that be shrewdly touchéd.
 But, I say, let see, and if thou have any more.

Fol. I have an whole armory of such haberdash in store;
 For there be others that folly doth use,
 That follow fond fantasies and virtue refuse.

Fan. Nay, this is my part that thou speakest of now.

Fol. So is all the remnant, I make God avow;
 For thou formest such fantasies in their mind
 That every man almost groweth out of kind.

Cr. Con. By the mass, I am glad that I came hither,
 To hear you two rutters¹ dispute together.

Fan. Nay, but Fancy must be either first or last.

Fol. But when Folly cometh all is past.

Fan. I wot not whether it cometh of thee or of me.
 But all is folly that I can see.

Cr. Con. Mary, sir, ye may swear it on a book!

Fol. Yea, turn over the leaf, read there and look
 How frantic Fancy first of all
 Maketh man and woman in folly to fall.

Cr. Con. Ay, sir, ay, ay! how by that!

Fan. A perilous thing to cast a cat
 Upon a naked man, an if she scrat.

Fol. So ho, I say, the hare is squat!
 For, frantic Fancy, thou makest man mad;

And I, Folly, bringeth them to *qui fuit gad*,¹
 With *qui fuit*, brain-sick I have them brought,

From *qui fuit aliquid*,² to sheer shaking nought.⁴

Cr. Con. Well argued and surely on both sides!

But for thee, Fancy, Magnificence abides.

¹gallants.

²i.e. to a state of regret — I “who was” — in the past.

³“who was something.” ⁴sheer nothing.

Fan. Why, shall I not have Folly with me also?

Cr. Con. Yea, perde, man, whether that ye ride or go:
Yet for his name we must find a sleight.

Fan. By the mass, he shall hight Conceit.

Cr. Con. Not a better name under the sun:
With Magnificence thou shalt won.

Fol. God have mercy, good godfather.

Cr. Con. Yet I would that ye had gone rather;
For, as soon as ye come in Magnificence' sight,
All measure and good rule is gone quite.

Fan. And shall we have liberty to do what we will?

Cr. Con. Riot at liberty rusheth it out still.

Fol. Yea, but tell me one thing.

Cr. Con. What is that?

Fol. Who is master of the mash-vat¹?

Fan. Yea, for he hath a full dry soul.

Cr. Con. Cock's arms, thou shalt keep the brewhouse bowl.

Fol. But may I drink thereof whiles that I stare?

Cr. Con. When Measure is gone, what needest thou spare?
When Measure is gone, we may slay care.

Fol. Now then go we hence. "Away the mare . . . !"

[*Exit FOLLY and FANCY.*

Stage 2. Scene 19

CRAFTY CONVEYANCE alone in the place

Cr. Con. It is wonder to see the world about,

To see what folly is used in every place;
Folly hath a room, I say, in every rout,
To put where he list Folly hath free chace;
Folly and Fancy all where, every man doth face and brace;
Folly footeth it properly, Fancy leadeth the dance;
And next come I after, Counterfeit Countenance.

¹mashing-vat for malt. A line missing after this ?

Whoso to me giveth good advertence
 Shall see many things done craftily:
 By me conveyed in wanton insolence,

Privy pointments conveyed so properly,
 (For many times much kindness is denied
 For dread that we dare not oft lest we be spied.)

By me is conveyed mickle pretty ware,
 Sometime, I say, behind the door for need;
 I have an hobby can make larks to dare²;
 I knit together many a broken threde.
 It is great almess the hungry to feed,
 To clothe the naked where is lacking a smock,
 Trim at her tail, ere a man can turn a sock:

What ho, be ye merry! was it not well conveyéd?
 As oft as ye list, so honesty be saved;
 "Alas, dear heart, look that we be not perceivéd!"
 Without craft nothing is well behaved;
 Though I shew you courtesy, say not that I craved,
 Yet convey it craftily, and hardly spare not for me,
 So that there know no man, but I and she.

Theft also and petty bribery
 Without me be full oft espied;
 My inwit dealing there can no man descry,
 Convey it by craft, lift and lay aside:
 Full much flattery and falsehood I hide,
 And by crafty conveyance I will, an I can,
 Save a strong thief and hang a true man.

But some men would convey, and con no skill,
 As malapert taverners that check³ with their betters,
 Their conveyance wieldeth the work all by will;
 And some will take upon them to counterfeit letters,
 And therewithal convey himself into a pair of fetters;

¹Line missing.

²an hawk that can terrify larks.

³taunt.

And some will convey by the pretence of sadness,¹
Till all their conveyance is turn'd into madness.

Crafty conveyance is no child's game:

By crafty conveyance many one is brought up of nought;
Crafty Conveyance can cloak himself from shame,
For by crafty conveyance wonderful things are wrought:
By conveyance crafty I have brought
Unto Magnificence a full ungracious sort,
For all hooks² unhappy to me have resort.

Stage 3. Scene 20. DELUSION

Enter MAGNIFICENCE with LIBERTY and FELICITY

Magn. Trust me, Liberty, it grieveth me right sore
To see you thus ruled and stand in such awe.

Lib. Sir, as by my will, it shall be so no more.

Fel. Yet Liberty without rule is not worth a straw.

Magn. Tush, hold your peace, ye speak like a daw!
Ye shall be occupied, Wealth, at my will.

Cr. Con. All that ye say, sir, is reason and skill.

Magn. Maister Surveyor, where have ye been so long?

Remember ye not how my Liberty by Measure ruled was?

Cr. Con. In good faith, sir, meseemeth he had the more
wrong.

Lib. Mary, sir, so did he exceed and pass,
They drove me to learning like a dull ass.

Fel. It is good yet that Liberty be ruled by reason.

Magn. Tush, hold your peace, ye speak out of season!

Youself shall be ruled by Liberty and Largesse.

Fel. I am content, so it in measure be.

¹soberness.

²scoundrels.

Lib. Must Measure, in the mare's name, you furnish and dress?

Magn. Nay, nay, not so, my friend Felicity.

Cr. Con. Not, an your grace would be ruled by me.

Lib. Nay, he shall be ruled even as I list.

Fel. Yet it is good to beware of "Had I list."

Magn. Sir, by Liberty and Largesse I will that ye shall

Be governed and guided: wot ye what I say?

Maister Surveyor, Largesse to me call.

Cr. Con. It shall be done.

Magn. Yea, but bid him come away
At once, and let him not tarry all day.

[*Exit CRAFTY CONVEYANCE.*

Fel. Yet it is good wisdom to work wisely by wealth.

Lib. Hold thy tongue, an thou love thy health.

Magn. What, will ye waste wind, and prate thus in vain?

Ye have eaten sauce, I trow, at the Tailor's Hall.

Lib. Be not too bold, my friend; I counsel you, bear a brain.

Magn. And whatso we say, hold your content withall.

Fel. Sir, yet without sapience your substance may be small;
For, where is no measure, how may worship endure?

[*Enter FANCY.*

Fan. Sir, I am here at your pleasure.

Your grace sent for me, I ween; what is your will?

Magn. Come hither, Largesse, take here Felicity.

Fan. Why, ween you that I can keep him long still?

Magn. To rule as ye list, lo here is Liberty.

Lib. I am here ready.

Fan. What, shall we have Wealth at our guiding to rule as
we list?

Then farewell thrift, by him that cross kist!

Fel. I trust your grace will be agreeable

That I shall suffer none impeachment

By their demenance, nor loss reprobable.

Magn. Sir, ye shall follow mine appetite and intent.

Fel. So it be by measure I am right well content.

Fan. What, all by measure, good sir, and none excess?

Lib. Why, wealth hath made many a man brainless.

Fel. That was by the means of too much liberty.

Magn. What, can ye agree thus and appose?

Fel. Sir, as I say, there was no fault in me.

Lib. Yea, of Jack a Thrum's babble can ye make a glose?¹

Fan. Sore said, I tell you, and well to the purpose:

What should a man do with you? — lock you under kay.

Fel. I say, it is folly to give all wealth away.

Lib. Whether should Wealth be ruled by Liberty,

Or Liberty by Wealth? Let see, tell me that.

Fel. Sir, as meseemeth, ye should be ruled by me.

Magn. What need you with him thus prate and chat?

Fan. Shew us your mind then, how to do and what.

Magn. I say, that I will ye have him in guiding.

Lib. Maister Felicity, let be your chiding,

And so, as ye see it will be no better,

Take it in worth suchē as you find.

Fan. What the devil, man, your name shall be the greater,

For Wealth without Largesse is all out of kind.²

Lib. And Wealth is nought worth if Liberty be behind.

Magn. Now hold ye content, for there is none other shift.

Fel. Then waste must be welcome, and farewell thrift!

Magn. Take of his substance a sure inventory,

And get you home together; for Liberty shall bide,

And wait upon me.

Lib. And yet for a memory,

Make indentures how ye and I shall guide.

Fan. I can do nothing but he stand beside.

Lib. Sir, we can do nothing the one without the other.

Magn. Well, get you hence then, and send me some other.

¹gloss.

²i.e. unnatural.

Fan. Whom? lusty Pleasure, or merry Conceit?

Magn. Nay, first lusty Pleasure is my desire to have,
And let the other another time await,

Howbeit, that fond fellow is a merry knave!

But look that ye occupy the authority that I you gave.

[*Exit FELICITY, LIBERTY, and FANCY.*

Stage 3. Scene 21

MAGNIFICENCE *alone in the place*

For now, sirs, I am like as a prince should be:
I have Wealth at will, Largesse and Liberte.

Fortune to her laws cannot abandune¹ me,
But I shall of Fortune rule the rein;
I fear nothing Fortune's perplexitie;
All honour to me must needēs stoop and lean;
I sing of two partēs without a mean;
I have wind and weather over all to sail,
No stormy rage against me can prevail.

Alexander, of Macedony king,
That all the orient had in subjection,
Though all his conquests were brought to reckoning,
Might seem right well under my protection
To reign, for all his martial affection;
For I am Prince Peerless, provēd of port,
Bathēd with bliss, embracēd with comfōrt.

Syrus, that solemn sire of Babylon,
That Israel releasēd of their captivitie,
For all his pomp, for all his royal throne,
He may not be comparēd unto me.
I am the diamond doubtless of dignitie:
Surely it is I that all may save and spill²;
No man so hardy to work against my will.

¹subject.

²destroy.

Porsena, the proud provost of Turky land,
 That rated the Romans and made them ill rest,
 Nor Caesar July, that no man might withstand,
 Were never half so richly as I am drest:
 No, that I assure you: look who was the best.
 I reign in my robés, I rule as me list,
 I drive down these dastards with a dint of my fist.

Of Cato, the count, accounted the cane,
 Darius, the doughty chieftain of Persé,
 I set not by the proudest of them a prane,¹
 Ne by none other that any man can rehearse.
 I follow in felicitie without reversé.
 I drede no danger, I dance all in delight:
 My name is Magnificence, man most of might.

Hercules the hardy, with his stubborn clubbéd mace,
 That made Cerebus to couch, the cur dog of hell,
 And Theseus, that proud was Pluto to face,
 It would not become them with me for to mell:
 For of all barons bold I bear the bell,
 Of all doughty, I am doughtiest duke, as I deem:
 To me all princes to lowt² may beseem.

Charlemagne, that maintainéd the nobles of France,
 Arthur of Albion, for all his brimmé³ beard,
 Nor Basian⁴ the bold, for all his briabance,⁵
 Nor Alaric, that ruléd the Gothiance by swerd,
 Nor no man on mould can make me afeard.
 What man is so mazéd with me that dare meet,
 I shall flap him as a fool to fall at my feet.

Galba, whom his gallants garde for to gasp,⁶
 Nor Nero, that neither set by God nor man,

¹a prawn. ²bow. ³bristly.

⁴Antoninus Bassianus Caracalla. ⁵pilfering.

⁶made to gasp.

Nor Vespasian, that bore in his nose a wasp,
 Nor Hanibal against Rome gates that ran,
 Nor yet Scipio, that noble Carthage wan,
 Nor none so hardy of them with me that durst crake,
 But I shall frounce them on the foretop, and gar¹ them to
 quake.

Stage 3. Scene 22

*Here cometh in COURTY ABUSION, doing
 reverence and courtesy*

Court. Ab. At your commandment, sir, with all due reverence.

Magn. Welcome, Pleasure, to our magnificence.

Court. Ab. Pleaseth it your grace to show what I do shall?

Magn. Let us hear of your pleasure to pass the time withal.

Court. Ab. Sir, then, with the favour of your benign sufferance

To shew you my mind myself I will advance,
 If it like your grace to take it in degree.²

Magn. Yes, sir, so good man in you I see,
 And in your dealing so good assurance,
 That we delight greatly in your daliance.

Court. Ab. Ah, sir, your grace me doth extol and raise,
 And far beyond my merits ye me command and praise;
 Howbeit, I would be right glad, I you assure,
 Any thing to do that might be to your pleasure.

Magn. As I be saved, with pleasure I am surprised
 Of your language, it is so well devised;
 Polishéd and fresh³ is your ornacy.⁴

Court. Ab. I would to God that I were half so crafty,
 Or in elect utterance half so eloquent,
 As that I might your noble grace content!

Magn. Trust me, with you I am highly pleaséd,
 For in my favour I have you enfeofféd and seized.⁵

¹make.

²take it kindly.

³elegant.

⁴ornate diction.

He is not living your manners can amend;
 Mary, your speech is as pleasant as though it were penn'd;
 To hear your commune, it is my high comfort;
 Point devise all pleasure is your port.

Court. Ab. Sir, I am the better of your noble report;
 But, of your patience under the support,
 If it would like you to hear my poor mind —

Magn. Speak, I beseech thee, leave nothing behind.

Court. Ab. So as ye be a prince of great might,
 It is seeming your pleasure ye delight,
 And to acquaint you with carnal delectation,
 And to fall in acquaintance with every new fashion;
 And quickly your appetites to sharp and address,
 To fasten your fancy upon a fair mistress,
 That quickly is envied with rudies of the rose,
 Inpurtured¹ with features after your purpose;
 The strains of her veins as Indy azure blue,
 Enbudded with beauty and colour fresh of hue,
 As lily-white to look upon her leer,²
 Her eyen relucnt as carbuncle so clear,
 Her mouth embalmed, delectable and merry,
 Her lusty lips ruddy as the cherry:

How like you? ye lack, sir, such a lusty lass.

Magn. Ah, that were a baby to 'brace and to bass!
 I would I had, by him that hell did harrow,
 With me in keeping such a Philip Sparrow!
 I would hawk whilst my head did wark,³
 So I might hobby for such a lusty lark!

These words in mine ear they be so lustily spoken,
 That on such a female my flesh would be wroken⁴;
 They touch me so thoroughly, and tickle my conceit,
 That weried I would be on such a bait:

Ah, Cock's arms, where might such one be found?

Court. Ab. Will ye spend any money?

Magn. Yea, a thousand pound!

¹Adorned.

²skin.

³i.e.

until my head did ache.

⁴satiated.

Court. Ab. Nay, nay, for less I warrant you to be sped,
And brought home, and laid in your bed.

Magn. Would money, trowest thou, make such one to the
call?¹

Court. Ab. Money maketh merchants, I tell you, over all.

Magn. Why, will a mistress be won for money and for gold?

Court. Ab. Why, was not for money Troy both bought and
sold?

Full many a strong city and town hath been won
By the means of money without any gon.

A mistress, I tell you, is but a small thing;
A goodly ribbon, or a gold ring,

May win with a sawte² the fortress of the hold.

But one thing I warn you, press forth and be bold!

Magn. Yea, but some be full coy and passing hard-hearted.

Court. Ab. But, blessed be our Lord, they will be soon
converted!

Magn. Why, will they then be intreated, the most and the
least?

Court. Ab. Yea, for *omnis mulier meretrix, si celari potest.*³

Magn. Ah, I have spied ye can much broken sorrow!

Court. Ab. I could hold you with such talk hence till to-
morrow;

But if it like your grace, more at large

Me to permit my mind to discharge,

I would yet shew you further of my conceit.

Magn. Let see what ye say, shew it straight.

Court. Ab. Wisely let these words in your mind be weighed:

By wayward wilfulness let each thing be conveyed;

Whatsoever ye do, follow your own will;

Be it reason or none, it shall not greatly skill;

Be it right or wrong, by the advise of me,

Take your pleasure and use free libertie;

And if you see anything against your mind,

Then some occasion of quarrel ye must find,

¹A metaphor from falconry.

²assault.

³every woman is a whore, if she can be on the sly.

And frown it and face it, as though ye would fight,
 Fret yourself for anger and for despight;
 Hear no man, whatsoever they say,
 But do as ye list, and take your own way.

Magn. Thy words and my mind oddly well accord.

Court. Ab. What should ye do else? are not you a lord?
 Let your lust and liking stand for a law;
 Be wrestling and writhing, and away draw.

An ye see a man that with him ye be not pleased,
 And that your mind cannot well be eased,
 As if a man fortune to touch you on the quick,
 Then feign yourself diseased and make yourself sick:
 To stir up your stomach you must you forge,
 Call for a cawdle and cast up your gorge,
 With "Cock's arms, rest shall I none have
 Till I be revenged on that whoreson knave!

Ah, how my stomach wambleth! I am all in a sweat!
 Is there no whoreson that knave that will beat?"

Magn. By Cock's wounds, a wondrous fellow thou art!
 For oft times such a wambling goeth over my heart;
 Yet I am not heart-sick, but that me list.
 For mirth I have him curried, beaten, and blist,¹
 Him that I loved not and made him to lowt
 I am forthwith as whole as a trout –
 For such abusion I use now and then.

Court. Ab. It is none abusion, sir, in a noble man,
 It is a princely pleasure and a lordly mind;
 Such lusts at large may not be left behind.

Stage 3. Scene 23

Here cometh in CLOAKED COLLUSION with MEASURE

Cl. Col. (aside to MEASURE). Stand still here, and ye shall see
 That for your sake I will fall on my knee.

[MEASURE waits at the door.

¹wounded.

Court. Ab. Sir, Sober Sadness cometh, wherefore it be?

Magn. Stand up, sir, ye are welcome to me.

Cl. Col. Please it your grace, at the contemplation
Of my poor instance and supplication,
Tenderly to consider in your advertence,
Of our blessed Lord, sir, at the reverence,
Remember the good service that Measure hath you done,
And that ye will not cast him away so soon.

Magn. My friend, as touching to this your motion,
I may say to you I have but small devotion;
Howbeit, at your instance I will the rather
Do as much as for mine ownē father.

Cl. Col. Nay, sir, that affection ought to be reserved,
For of your grace I have it nought deserved;
But if it like you that I might round¹ in your ear
To shew you my mind, I would have the less fear.

Magn. Stand a little aback, sir, and let him come hither.

Court. Ab. With a good will, sir, God speed you both
together.

Cl. Col. (aside to MAGNIFICENCE). Sir, so it is: this man is
here by,
That for him to labour he hath prayed me heartily;
Notwithstanding to you be it said,
To trust in me he is but disceivéd;
For, so help me God, for you he is not meet:
I speak the softlier, because he should not weet.

Magn. Come hither, Pleasure, you shall hear mine intent:
Measure, ye know well, with him I cannot be content,
And surely, as I am now adviséd,
I will have him re-hated and dispiséd.
How say ye, sirs, herein what is best?

Court. Ab. By mine advise with you, in faith, he shall not rest
Cl. Col. Yet, sir, reserved your better judgement,
It were better he spake with you ere he went,
That he know not but that I have suppled
All that I can his matter for to speed.

¹whisper.

Magn. Now, by your troth, gave he you not a bribe?

Cl. Col. Yes, with his hand I made him to subscribe
A bill of record for an annual rent.

Court. Ab. But for all that he is like to have a glent.¹

Cl. Col. Yea, by my troth, I shall warrant you for me,
And he may go to the devil; so that I may have my fee,
What care I?

Magn. By the mass, well said.

Court. Ab. What force² ye, so that ye be paid?

Cl. Col. But yet, lo, I would, ere that he went,
Lest that he thought that his money were evil spent,
That ye would look on him, though it were not long.

Magn. Well canst thou help a priest to sing a song!

Cl. Col. So it is all the manner nowadays,
For to use such hafting and crafty ways.

Court. Ab. He telleth you truth, sir, as I you ensure.

Magn. Well, for thy sake the better I may endure
That he come hither, and to give him a look

That he shall like the worse all this woke.³

Cl. Col. I care not how soon he be refused,
So that I may craftily be excused.

Court. Ab. Where is he?

Cl. Col. Mary, I made him abide,
Whilst I came to you, a little here beside.

Magn. Well, call him, and let us hear him reason,
And we will be communing in the mean season.

Court. Ab. This is a wise man, sir, wheresoever ye had him.

Magn. An honest person, I tell you, and a sad.

Court. Ab. He can full craftily this matter bring about.

Magn. Whilst I have him, I need nothing doubt.

[CLOAKED COLLUSION brings MEASURE forward,
while MAGNIFICENCE looks on him very loftily.]

Cl. Col. By the mass, I have done that I can,
And more than ever I did for any man:
I trow, ye heard yourself what I said.

¹fall.

²care.

³week.

Meas. Nay, indeed; but I saw how ye prayed,
And made instance for me by likelihode.¹

Cl. Col. Nay, I tell you, I am not wont to fode:
Them that dare put their trust in me;
And thereof ye shall a larger proof see.

Meas. Sir, God reward you as ye have deserved:
But think you with Magnificence I shall be reserved?

Cl. Col. By my troth, I cannot tell you that;
But, an I were as ye, I would not set a gnat
My Magnificence, nor yet none of his,
For, go when ye shall, of you shall he miss.

Meas. Sir, as ye say.

Cl. Col. Nay, come on with me.
Yet once again I shall fall on my knee
For your sake, whatsoever befall;
I set not a fly, and all go to all.

Meas. The Holy Ghost be with your grace.

Cl. Col. Sir, I beseech you, let pity have some place
In your breast towards this gentleman.

Magn. I was your good lord till that ye began
So masterfully upon you for to take
With my servants, and such masteries 'gan make,
That wholly my mind with you is discontent;
Wherefore I will that ye be resident
With me no longer.

Cl. Col. Say somewhat now, let see,
For your self.

Meas. Sir, if I might permitted be,
I would to you say a word or twain.

Magn. What, wouldest thou, lurdain, with me brawl again?
Have him hence, I say, out of my sight;
That day I see him I shall be worse all night!

Court. Ab. Hence, thou haynard, out of the doors fast!

[Here MEASURE goeth out of the place with
COURTLY ABUSION.]

¹as it appeared.

²trick.

MAGNIFICENCE

Stage 3. Scene 24

Magn. Alas, my stomach fareth as it would cast!

Cl. Col. Abide, sir, abide, let me hold your head.

Magn. A bowl or a basin, I say, for God's bread!

Ah, my head! But is the whoreson gone?

God give him a mischief! Nay, now let me alone.

Cl. Col. A good drift, sir, a prettyfeat:

By the good Lord, yet your temples beat.

Magn. Nay, so God me help, it was no great vexation,

For I am panged oft times of this same fashon.

Cl. Col. Cock's arms, how Pleasure plucked him forth!

Magn. Yea, walk he must, it was no better worth.

Cl. Col. Sir, now methink your heart is well eased.

Magn. Now Measure is gone I am the better pleased.

Cl. Col. So to be ruled by Measure, it is a pain!

Magn. Mary, I ween he would not be glad to come again!

Cl. Col. So I wot not what he should do here:

Where men's bellies is measured, there is no cheer;

For I hear but few men that give any praise

Unto Measure, I say, nowadays.

Magn. Measure, tut! what, the devil of hell!

Scantly one with Measure that will dwell.

Cl. Col. Not among noble men, as the world goeth:

It is no wonder therefore though ye be wroth

With Measure. Where all nobleness is, there I have past:

They catch that catch may, keep and hold fast,

Out of all measure themselves to enrich:

No force¹ what though his neighbour die in a ditch.

With polling and plucking out of all measure,

Thus must ye stuff and store your treasure.

Magn. Yet sometime, parde, I must use largesse.

Cl. Col. Yea, mary, sometime in a mess of vergess,²

As in a trifle or in a thing of nought,

As giving a thing that ye never bought:

It is the guise now, I say, over all.

Largesse in words, for rewards are but small:

¹None cares.

²verjuice.

To make fair promise, what are ye the worse?
Let me have the rule of your purse.

Magn. I have taken it to Largesse and Libertie.

Cl. Col. Then it is done as it should be:

But use your largesse by the advise of me,
And I shall warrant you wealth and libertie.

Magn. Say on, methink your reasons be profound.

Cl. Col. Sir, of my counsel this shall be the ground:

To chose out ii. iii. of such as you love best,
And let all your fancies upon them rest;
Spare for no cost to give them pound and penny,
Better to make three rich than for to make many;
Give them more than enough and let them not lack,
And as for all other let them truss and pack;
Pluck from an hundred, and give it to three,
Let neither patent 'scape them nor fee;
And wheresoever you will fall to a reckoning,
Those three will be ready even at your beckoning,
For them shall you have at liberty to lowt;
Let them have all, and the other go without:
Thus joy without measure you shall have.

Magn. Thou sayst truth, by the heart that God me gave!

For, as thou sayst, right so shall it be:

And here I make thee upon Libertie
To be supervisor, and on Largesse also,
For as thou wilt, so shall the game go;
For in Pleasure, and Surveyance, and also in thee
I have set my whole felicitie,

And such as you will shall lack no promotion.

Cl. Col. Sir, sith that in me ye have such devotion,
Committing to me and to my fellows twain

Your wealth and felicity, I trust we shall obtain

To do you service after your appetite.

Magn. In faith, and your service right well I shall acquite;
And therefore hie you hence, and take this oversight.

Cl. Col. Now, Jesu preserve you, sir, prince most of might!

Stage 3. Scene 25

Magn. Thus, I say, I am environed with solace;
I dread no dints of fatal destiny.

Well were that lady might stand in my grace,
Me to embrace and love most specially:

Ah, Lord, so I would halse her heartily,
So I would clepe her, so I would kiss her sweet!

Enter FOLLY

Fol. Mary, Christ grant ye catch no cold on your feet!

Magn. Who is this?

Fol. Conceit, sir, your own man.

Magn. What tidings with you, sir? I befool thy brain-pan!

Fol. By our lakin, sir, I have been a hawking for the wild swan.
My hawk is ramage, ¹ and it happed that she ran –

Flew I should say – into an old barn
To reach at a rat, I could not her warn;
She pinched her pinion, by God, and catchéd harm:
It was a runner; nay, fool, I warrant her blood warm!

Magn. Ah, sir, thy gerfalcon and thou be hanged together!

Fol. And, sir, as I was coming to you hither,
I saw a fox suck on a cow's udder,
And with a lime-rod I took them both together.
I trow it be a frost, for the way is slither:
See, for God avow, for cold as I chither.

Magn. Thy words hang together as feathers in the wind.

Fol. Ah, sir, told I not you how I did find
A knave and a churl, and all of one kind?

I saw a weathercock wag with the wind;
Great marvel I had, and mused in my mind;
The hounds ran before, and the hare behind;
I saw a losell lead a lurdain, and they were both blind;
I saw a sowter² go to supper ere ever he had dined.

Magn. By Cock's heart, thou art a fine merry knave!

Fol. I make God avow, ye will none other men have.

¹wild, coy.

²cobbler.

Magn. What sayst thou?

Fol. Mary, I pray God your mastership to save:
I shall give you a gaud¹ of a gosling that I have,
The gander and the goose both grazing on one grave;
Then Rowland the reve² ran, and I began to rave,
And with a bristle of a boar his beard did I shave.

Magn. If ever I heard such another, God give me shame!

Fol. Sim Saddlegoose was my sire, and Dawcock my dame:
I could, an I list, gar³ you laugh at a game,

How a woodcock wrestled with a lark that was lame:
The bittern said boldly that they were to blame;
The fieldfare would have fiddled, and it would not frame;
The crane and the curlew thereat 'gan to grame⁴;
The snite snivled in the snout and smiled at the game.

Magn. Cock's bones, heard you ever such another!

Fol. See, sir, I beseech you, Largesse my brother.

Enter FANCY

Magn. What tidings with you, sir, that you look so sad?

Fan. When ye know what I know ye will not be glad!

Fol. What, brother brainsick, how farest thou?

Magn. Yea, let be thy japes, and tell me how

The case requireth.

Fan. Alas, alas, an heavy meeting!

I would tell you, an if I might for weeping.

Fol. What, is all your mirth now turned to sorow?

Farewell till soon, adew till to-morrow.

[Exit FOLLY.

Magn. I pray thee, Largesse, let be thy sobbing.

Fan. Alas, sir, ye are undone with stealing and robbing!

Ye sent us a supervisor for to take heed:

Take heed of yourself, for now ye have need.

Magn. What, hath Sadness beguiled me so?

Fan. Nay, madness hath beguiled you and many mo;
For Liberty is gone and also Felicitie.

¹jest.

²bailiff.

³make.

⁴grieve.

Magn. Gone? alas, ye have undone me!
Fan. Nay, he that sent us, Cloakéd Collusion,
 And your painted Pleasure, Courtly Abusion,
 And your demeanour with Counterfeit Countenance,
 And your surveyor, Crafty Conveyance,
 Ere ever we were ware brought us in adversity,
 And hath robbed you quite from all felicity.

Magn. Why, is this the largesse that I have uséd?

Fan. Nay, it was your fondness that ye have uséd.

Magn. And is this the credence that I gave to the letter?

Fan. Why, could not your wit serve you no better?

Magn. Why, who would have thought in you such guile?

Fan. What? yes, by the rood, sir, it was I all this while
 That you trusted, and Fancy is my name;
 And Folly, my brother, that made you much game.

Here cometh in ADVERSITY

Magn. Alas, who is yonder, that so grimly lookès?

Fan. Adew, for I will not come in his clutches.

[*Exit FANCY.*]

Stage 4. Scene 26. OVERTHROW

Magn. Lord, so my flesh trembleth now for drede!

[*Here MAGNIFICENCE is beaten down, and spoiled
 from all his goods and raiment.*]

Adver. I am Adversity, that for thy misdeed
 From God am sent to 'quite thee thy mede.
 Vile vilyard,¹ thou must not now my dint withstand,
 Thou must abide the dint of my hand:
 Lie there, losell, for all thy pomp and pride;
 Thy pleasure now with pain and trouble shall be tried.
 The stroke of God, Adversity I hight;
 I pluck down king, prince, lord, and knight,

¹old man.

I rush at them roughly, and make them lie full low,
 And in their most trust I make them overthrow.
 This losell was a lord, and livéd at his lust,
 And now, like a lurdain, he lieth in the dust:
 He knew not himself, his heart was so high;
 Now is there no man that will set by him a fly:
 He was wont to boast, brag, and to brace;
 Now dare he not for shame look one in the face:
 All wordly wealth for him too little was;
 Now hath he right nought, naked as an ass:
 Sometime without measure he trusted in gold,
 And now without measure he shall have hunger and cold.
 Lo, sirs, thus I handle them all
 That follow their fancies in folly to fall:
 Man or woman, of what estate they be,
 I councel them beware of Adversitie.
 Of sorrowful servants I have many scores:
 I visit them sometimes with blains and with sores;
 With botches and carbuncles in care I them knit;
 With the gowt I make them to groan where they sit;
 Some I make lepers and lazars full hoarse;
 And from that they love best some I divorce;
 Some with the marmoll¹ to halt I them make;
 And some to cry out of the bone-ache;
 And some I visit with burning of fire;
 Of some I wring of the neck like a wire;
 And some I make in a rope to totter and walter²;
 And some for to hang themself in a halter;
 And some I visit with battle, war, and murther,
 And make each man to slay the other;
 To drown or to slay themself with a knife;
 And all is for their ungracious life.
 Yet sometime I strike where is none offence,
 Because I would prove men of their patience.
 But, nowadays, to strike I have great cause,
 Lidderns so little set by God's laws.

¹ulcers.²tumble.

Fathers and mothers, that be negligent,
 And suffer their children to have their intent,
 To guide them virtuously that will not remember,
 Them or their children oft time I dismember;
 Their children because that they have no meekness;
 I visit their fathers and mothers with sickness;
 And if I see thereby they will not amend,
 Then mischief suddenly I them send;
 For there is nothing that more displeaseth God
 Than from their children to spare the rod
 Of correction, but let them have their will.
 Some I make lame, and some I do kill;
 And some I strike with a frenzy;
 Of some of their children I strike out the eye;
 And where the father by wisdom worship hath won,
 I send oft times a fool to be his son.
 Wherefore of Adversity look ye be ware,
 For when I come cometh sorrow and care:
 For I strike lords of realms and lands
 That rule not by measure that they have in their hands,
 That sadly rule not their household men;
 I am God's prepositor,¹ I print them with a pen;
 Because of their negligence and of their wanton vages,²
 I visit them and strike them with many sore plagues.
 To take, sirs, example of that I you tell,
 And beware of Adversity by my counsell,
 Take heed of this caitif that lieth here on ground;
 Behold, how Fortune on him hath frowned!
 For though we shew you this in game and play,
 Yet it proveth earnest, ye may see, every day.
 For now will I from this caitif go,
 And take mischief and vengeance of other mo
 That hath deserved it as well as he.
 Ho, where art thou? come hither, Povertie,
 Take this caitif to thy lore.

[Exit.]

¹A scholar that is an overseer.²vagaries.

*Stage 4. Scene 27**Enter POVERTY*

Pover. Ah, my bones ache, my limbs be sore;
 Alas, I have the sciatica full evil in my hip!
 Alas, where is youth that was wont for to skip?
 I am lowsy, and unliking, and full of scurf,
 My colour is tawny, coloured as turf.
 I am Poverty, that all men doth hate,
 I am baited with dogs at every man's gate;
 I am ragged and rent, as ye may see;
 Full few but they have envy at me.
 Now must I this carcass lift up:
 He dinéd with delight, with Poverty he must sup.
 Rise up, sir, and welcome unto me.

[*Here he goeth to lift up MAGNIFICENCE, and places
 a coverlet over him.*

Magn. Alas, where is now my gold and fee?
 Alas, I say, whereto am I brought?
 Alas, alas, alas, I die for thought!

Pover. Sir, all this would have been thought on before:
 He woteth not what wealth is that never was sore.

Magn. Fie, fie, that ever I should be brought in this snare!
 I wenéd once never to have knownen care.

Pover. Lo, such is this world! I find it writ,
 In wealth to beware, and that is wit.

Magn. In wealth to beware, if I had had grace,
 Never had I been brought in this case.

Pover. Now, sith it will no other be,
 All that God sendeth, take it in gre^t;
 For, though you were sometime of noble estate,
 Now must you learn to beg at every man's gate.

Magn. Alas, that ever I should be so shamed!
 Alas, that ever I Magnificence was named!

'in good part.

Alas, that ever I was so hard happed,
 In misery and wretchedness thus to be lapped!
 Alas, that I could not myself no better guide!
 Alas, in my cradle that I had not died!

Pover. Yea, sir, yea, leave all this rage,
 And pray to God your sorrows to assuage:
 It is folly to grudge against his visitation.

With heart contrite make your suplication
 Unto your Maker, that made both you and me,
 And, when it pleaseth God, better may be.

Magn. Alas, I wot not what I should pray!

Pover. Remember you better, sir, beware what ye say,
 For dread ye displease the high Dietie.

Put your will in his will, for surely it is he
 That may restore you again to felicitie,
 And bring you again out of adversitie.
 Therefore poverty look patiently ye take,
 And remember he suffered much more for your sake,
 Howbeit of all sin he was innocent,
 And ye have deserved this punishment.

Magn. Alas, with cold my limbs shall be marred!

Pover. Yea, sir, now must ye learn to lie hard,
 That was wont to lie on feather-beds of down;
 Now must your feet lie higher than your crown:
 Where you were wont to have caudles for your head,

Now must you munch mammocks¹ and lumps of bread;
 And where you had changes of rich array,
 Now lap you in a coverlet full fain that ye may;

And where that ye were pomped with what ye wold,

Now must ye suffer both hunger and cold:

With courtly silks ye were wont to be draw,

Now must ye learn to lie on the straw;

Your skin that was wrapped in shirts of Rennes,

Now must ye be storm ybeaten with showers and rains;

Your head that was wont to be happed most droopy and drowsy,

Now shall ye be scabbéd, scurvy, and lowsy.

¹leavings.

Magn. Fie on this world, full of treachery,
That ever nobleness should lie thus wretchedly!

Pover. Sir, remember the turn of Fortune's wheel,
That wantonly can wink, and winch: with her heel.
Now she will laugh, forthwith she will frown;
Suddenly set up, and suddenly plucked down:
She danceth variance with mutability;
Now all in wealth, forthwith in poverty;
In her promise there is no sikerness²;
All her delight is set in doubleness.

Magn. Alas, of Fortune I may well complain!

Pover. Yea, sir, yesterday will not be calléd again:
But yet, sir, now in this case,
Take it meekly, and thank God of his grace;
For now go I will beg for you some meat;
It is folly against God for to plead;
I will walk now with my begger's bags,
And wrap you the whiles with these homely rags.

[Going away, he says these words:

Ah, how my limbs be lither³ and lame!
Better it is to beg than to be hanged with shame;
Yet many had liefer hangéd be,
Than for to beg their meat for charitie:
They think it no shame to rob and steal,
Yet were they better to beg a great deal;
For by robbing they run in *manus tuas queck*,⁴
But begging is better medicine for the neck;
Yea, mary, is it, yea, so may I go.
Ah, Lord God, how the gowt wringeth me by the toe!

[Exit.

¹kick. ²surety. ³bad.

⁴i.e. get themselves quickly hanged, and say, "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit."

Stage 4. Scene 28

Here MAGNIFICENCE dolorously maketh his moan

Magn. O feeble fortune, O doleful destiny!
 O hateful hap, O careful cruelty!
 O sighing sorrow, O thoughtful misery!
 O redless¹ ruth, O painful poverty!
 O dolorous heart, O hard adversity!
 O odious distress, O deadly pain and woe!
 For worldy shame I wax both wan and blo.²

Where is now my wealth and my noble estate?
 Where is now my treasure, my lands, and my rent?
 Where is now all my servants that I had here of late?
 Where is now my gold upon them that I spent?
 Where is now all my rich habiliment?
 Where is now my kin, my friends, and my noble blood
 Where is now all my pleasure and my wordly good?
 Alas, my folly! alas, my wanton will!
 I may no more speak, till I have weapt my fill.

Stage 4. Scene 29

Here cometh in LIBERTY

Lib. With, yea mary, sirs, thus should it be:
 I kissed her sweet, and she kisséd me;
 I danced the darling on my knee;
 I gard her gasp, I gard he gle,³
 With "Dance on the lea, the lea!"
 I bassed that baby with heart so free;
 She is the bote of all my bale⁴:
 Ah so! that sigh was far-fet⁵!
 To love that lovesome I will not let;

¹unavailing.

²livid.

³wink.

⁴remedy of all my sorrow.

⁵far-fetched.

My heart is wholly on her set:
 I plucked her by the patlet¹;
 At my devise I with her met;
 My fancy fairly on her I set;

So merrily singeth the nightingale!
 In lust and liking my name is Libertie:
 I am desired with highest and lowest degree;
 I live as me list, I leap out at large;
 Of earthly thing I have no care nor charge;
 I am president of princes, I prick them with pride:
 What is he living that Liberty would lack?
 A thousand pound with Liberty may hold no tack;
 At liberty a man may be bold for to break;
 Wealth without liberty goeth all to wreak.
 But yet, sirs, hardly² one thing learn of me:
 I warn you beware of too much libertie,
 For *totum in toto*³ is not worth an haw;
 Too hardy, or too much, too free of the daw⁴;
 Too sober, too sad, too subtil, too wise;
 Too merry, too mad, too gigling, too nice⁵;
 Too full of fancies, too lordly, too proud;
 Too homely, too holy, too lewd, and too lowd;
 Too flattering, too smattering, too too out of har⁶;
 Too clattering, too chattering, too short, and too far;
 Too jetting, too jagging, and too full of japes;
 Too mocking, too mowing,⁷ too like a jacknapes:
 Thus *totum in toto* growtheth up, as ye may see,
 By means of madness, and too much libertie;
 For I am a virtue, if I be well uséd,
 And I am a vice where I am abuséd.

Magn. Ah, woe worth thee, Liberty, now thou sayst full true!
 That I used thee too much, sore may I rue.

Lib. What, a very vengeance, I say, who is that?
 What brothel,⁸ I say, is yonder bound in a mat?

¹neckerchief.

²assuredly.

³i.e. excess.

⁴i.e. too much fooling.

⁵wanton.

⁶out of joint.

⁷mimicking.

⁸wretch.

Magn. I am Magnificence, that sometime thy master was.

Lib. What, is the world thus come to pass?

Cock's arms, sirs, will ye not see

How he is undone by the means of me?

For if Measure had ruled Liberty as he began,

This lurdain that here lieth had been a nobleman.

But he abused so his free liberty,

That now he hath lost all his felicity,

Not thorough largesse of liberal expence,

But by the way of fancy insolence;

For liberality is most convenient

A prince to use with all his whole intent,

Largely rewarding them that have deservéd,

And so shall a nobleman nobly be servéd.

But nowadays as hucksters they huck and they stick,

And pinch at the payment of a pudding prick¹;

A laudable largesse, I tell you, for a lord,

To prate for the patching of a potshord!

Spare for the 'spence of a noble,² that his honour might save,

And spend hundreds for the pleasure of a knave!

But so long they reckon with their reasons amiss

That they lose their liberty and all that there is.

Magn. Alas, that ever I occupied such abusion!

Lib. Yea, for now it hath brought thee to confusion:

For, where I am occupied and used wilfully,

It cannot continue long prosperously;

As evidently in reckless youth you may see,

How many come to mischief for too much liberty;

And some in the world their brain is so idle

That they set their children to run on the bridle,

In youth to be wanton and let them have their will;

An they never thrive in their age, it shall not greatly skill.

Some fall to folly themself for to spill,

And some fall preaching at the Tower Hill;

Some hath so much liberty of one thing and other

That neither they set by father nor mother;

¹skewer that fastens the pudding-bag.

²i.e. the coin so called.

Some have so much liberty that they fear no sin,
 Till, as ye see many times, they shame all their kin.
 I am so lusty to look on, so fresh, and so free,
 That nuns will leave their holiness, and run after me;
 Friars with folly I make them so fain,
 They cast up their obedience to catch me again,
 At liberty to wander and walk over all,
 That lustily they leap sometime their cloister wall.

[*Here someone blows a horn behind the audience.*

Yonder is a whoreson for me doth rechate:
 Adew, sirs, for I think lest that I come too late.

[*Here LIBERTY goes out.*

Magn. O good Lord, how long shall I endure
 This misery, this careful wretchedness?
 Of worldly wealth, alas, who can be sure?
 In Fortune's friendship there is no steadfastness:
 She hath deceived me with her doubleness.
 For to be wise all men may learn of me,
 In wealth to beware of hard adversitie.

[*Here cometh in CRAFTY CONVEYANCE and CLOAKED
 COLLUSION, with a lusty laughter.*

Cr. Con. Ha, ha, ha! for laughter I am like to brast.

Cl. Col. Ha, ha, ha! for sport I am like to spew and cast.

Cr. Con. What hath thou gotten, in faith, to thy share?

Cl. Col. In faith, of his coffers the bottoms are bare.

Cr. Con. As for his plate and silver, and such trash,
 I warrant you, I have given it a lash.

Cl. Col. What, then he may drink out of a stone cruse?

Cr. Con. With, yea, sir, by Jesu that slain was with Jews!
 He may rince a pitcher, for his plate is to wed.¹

Cl. Col. In faith, and he may dream on a dagswane for any
 feather-bed.

Cr. Con. By my troth, we have rifled him meetly well!

¹sound a retreat (in hunting).

²pledged,

Cl. Col. Yea, but thank me thereof every deal.

Cr. Con. Thank thee thereof, in the devil's date!

Cl. Col. Leave thy prating, or else I shall lay thee on the pate.

Cr. Con. Nay, to wrangle, I warrant thee, it is but a stone caste.

Cl. Col. By the mass, I shall cleave thy head to the waist.

Cr. Con. Yea, wilt thou cleanly cleave me in the clift with thy nose?

Cl. Col. I shall thrust in thee my dagger —

Cr. Con. Thorough the leg into the hose.

Cl. Col. Nay, whoreson, here is my glove; take it up, an thou dare.

Cr. Con. Turd, thou art good to be a man of war!

Cl. Col. I shall skelp thee on the scalp; lo, seest thou that?

Cr. Con. What, wilt thou skelp me? thou dare not look on a gnat.

Cl. Col. By Cock's bones, I shall bliss¹ thee, an thou be too bold.

Cr. Con. Nay, then thou wilt ding the devil, an thou be not hold.²

Cl. Col. But wottest thou, whoreson? I rede³ thee to be wise.

Cr. Con. Now I rede thee beware, I have warned thee twice.

Cl. Col. Why, wendest thou that I forbear thee for thine own sake?

Cr. Con. Peace, or I shall wring thy be in a brake?

Cl. Col. Hold thy hand, daw, off thy dagger, and stint of thy din,

Or I shall fawchin⁴ thy flesh, and scrape thee on the skin.

Cr. Con. Yea, wilt thou, hangman? I say, thou cavell⁵!

Cl. Col. Nay, thou rude ravener, rain-beated javell!

Cr. Con. What, thou Colin Coward, knownen and tried!

Cl. Col. Nay, thou false-hearted dastard, thou dare not abide!

Cr. Con. And if there were none to displease but thou and I, Thou should not 'scape, whoreson, but thou should die.

• ¹wound.

• ²holden.

• ³advise.

• ⁴cut.

• ⁵A horse (properly).

Cl. Col. Nay, I shall wring thee, whoreson, on the wrist.

Cr. Con. Mary, I defy thy best and thy worst.

[*Here cometh in COUNTERFEIT COUNTENANCE.*

C. Count. What, a very vengeance, need all these words?
Go together by the heads, and give me your swords.

Cl. Col. So he is the worst brawler that ever was born.

Cr. Con. In faith, so to suffer thee, it is but a scorn.

C. Count. Now let us be all one, and let us live in rest,
For we be, sirs, but a few of the best.

Cl. Col. By the mass, man, thou shalt find me reasonable.

Cr. Con. In faith, and I will be to reason agreeable.

C. Count. Then I trust to God and the holy rood,
Here shall be no great shedding of blood.

Cl. Col. By our lakin, sir, not by my will.

Cr. Con. By the faith that I owe to God, and I will sit still.

C. Count. Well said. But, in faith, what was your quarrel?

Cl. Col. Mary, sir, this gentleman called me a javell.

Cr. Con. Nay, by Saint Mary, it was ye called me knave.

Cl. Col. Mary, so ungodly language you me gave.

C. Count. Ah, we shall have more of this matter yet?
Methink ye are not greatly encumbered with wit.

Cr. Con. God's foot, I warrant you I am a gentleman born,
And thus to be faced¹ I think it great scorn.

C. Count. I cannot well tell of your dispositions;
An ye be a gentleman, ye have knave's conditions.

Cl. Col. By God, I tell you I will not be out-faced!

Cr. Con. By the mass, I warrant thee, I will not be braced.

C. Count. Tush, tush, it is a great defaut:
The one of you is too proud, the other is too haut.

Tell me briefly whereupon ye began.

Cl. Col. Mary, sir, he said that he was a prettier man
Than I was in opening of locks;

And, I tell you, I disdain much of his mocks.

Cr. Con. Thou saw never yet but I did my part,
The lock of a casket to make for to start.

¹out-faced.

C. Count. Nay, I know well enough yeare both well-handed
To grope a gardevians,¹ though it be well banded.

Cl. Col. I am the better yet in a budget.

Cr. Con. And I the better in a male.

C. Count. Tush, these matters that ye move are but sops in ale:
Your trimming and trammimg by me must be tangéd,
For, had I not been, ye both had been hangéd,
When we with Magnificence goods made chevisance.²

Magn. And therefore our Lord send you a very vengeance!

C. Count. What begger art thou that thus doth bane and
warry?

Magn. Ye be the thieves, I say, away my goods did carry.

Cl. Col. Cock's bones, thou begger, what is thy name?

Magn. Magnificence I was, whom ye have brought to shame.

C. Count. Yea, but trow you, sirs, that this is he?

Cr. Con. Go we near, and let us see.

Cl. Col. By Cock's bones, it is the same.

Magn. Alas, alas, sirs, ye are to blame!

I was your master, though ye think it scorn,
And now on me ye gaure³ and sporn.

C. Count. Lie still, lie still now, with ill-hail!⁴

Cr. Con. Yea, for thy language cannot thee avail.

Cl. Col. Abide, sir, abide, I shall make him to piss.

Magn. Now give me somewhat, for God's sake I crave!

Cr. Con. In faith, I give thee four quarters of a knave.

C. Count. In faith, and I bequeath him the tooth-ache.

Cl. Col. And bequeath him the bone-ache.

Cr. Con. And bequeath him the gowt and the gin.

Cl. Col. And bequeath him sorrow for his sin.

C. Count. And I give him Christ's curse,

With never a penny in his purse.

Cr. Con. And I give him the cough, the mur,⁵ and the
pose.⁶

Cl. Col. Yea, for *requiam aeternam* grow'th forth of his nose.
But now let us make merry and good cheer!

C. Count. And to the tavern let us draw near.

¹trunk. ²booty. ³stare. ⁴ill-health. ⁵bad cold. ⁶catarrh.

Cr. Con. And from thence to the half street,¹
To get us there some fresh meat.

Cl. Col. Why, is there any store of raw mutton?²

C. Count. Yea, in faith, or else thou art too great a glutton!

Cr. Con. But they say it is a queasy meat;
It will strike a man mischievously in a heat.

Cl. Col. In fay, man, some ribs of the mutton be so rank
That they will fire one ungraciously in the flank.

C. Count. Yea, and when ye come out of the shop,
Ye shall be clappéd with a colop,

That will make you to halt and to hop.

Cr. Con. Some be rested there that they think on it forty days,
For there be whorēs there at all assays.

Cl. Col. For the passion of God, let us go thither!

[*And they go hurriedly out of the place.*

Magn. Alas, mine own servants to shew me such reproach,
Thus to rebuke me, and have me in despight!

So shamefully to me, their master, to approach,
That sometime was a noble prince of might!

Alas, to live longer I have no delight!

For to live in misery it is harder than death:

I am weary of the world, for unkindness me sleth.

Stage 4. Scene 31

Here DESPAIR comes in

Des. Despair is my name, that Adversity doth follow:

In time of distress I am ready at hand;

I make heavy hearts with eyen full hollow;

Of fervent charity I quench out the brand;

Faith and Goodhope I make aside to stand;

In God's mercy, I tell them, is but folly to trust;

All grace and pitie I lay in the dust.

¹Bankside, Southwark, where the brothels were.

²i.e. whores.

What, liest thou there lingering, lewdly and loathsome?

It is too late now thy sins to repent;

Thou hast been so wayward, so wrangling, and so wrathsome,

And so far thou art behind of thy rent,

And so ungraciously thy days thou hast spent,

That thou art not worthy to look God in the face.

Magn. Nay, nay, man, I look never to have part of his grace;

For I have so ungraciously my life misuséd,

Though I ask mercy, I needs be refuséd.

Des. No, no, for thy sins be so exceeding far,

So innumerable and so full of despight,

And against thy Maker thou hast made such war,

That thou canst not have never mercy in his sight.

Magn. Alas, my wickedness, that may I wite¹!

But now I see well there is no better rede,²

But sigh and sorrow, and wish myself dede.

Des. Yea, rid thyself, rather than this life for to lead;

The world waxeth weary of thee, thou livest too long.

Here MISCHIEF comes in

Mis. And I, Mischief, am comen at need,

Out of thy life thee for to lead:

And look that it be not long

Ere that thyself thou go hong

With this halter good and strong;

Or else with this knife cut out a thong

Of thy throat-bowl, and rid thee out of pain:

Thou art not the first himself hath slain.

Lo, here is thy knife and a halter! and, ere we go further,

Spare not thyself, but boldly thee murther.

Des. Yea, have done at once without delay.

Magn. Shall I myself hang with an halter? nay;

¹blame.

²counsel.

Nay, rather will I chose to rid me of this life
In sticking myself with this fair knife.

[Here MAGNIFICENCE would slay himself with a knife.]

Mis. Alarum, alarum! too long we abide!

Des. Out, harrow, hell burneth! where shall I me hide?

Stage 5. Scene 32. RESTORATION

Here GOODHOPE comes in, DESPAIR and MISCHIEF flee away: GOODHOPE snatches away the knife, and says:

Good. Alas, dear son, sore cumbered is thy mind,
Thyself that thou would slay against nature and kind!
Magn. Ah, blessed may ye be, sir! what shall I you call?
Good. Goodhope, sir, my name is; remedy principall
Against all sautes¹ of your ghostly foe.
Who knoweth me, himself may never slo.
Magn. Alas, sir, so I am lapped in adversitie,
That Despair well nigh had mischieved me!
For, had ye not the sooner been my refuge,
Of damnation I had been drawen in the luge.
Good. Undoubted ye had lost yourself eternally.
There is no man may sin more mortally
Than of wanhope² through the unhappy ways,
By mischief to breviate and shorten his days.
But, my good son, learn from Despair to flee,
Wind you from wanhope, and acquaint you with me.
A great misadventure, thy Maker to displease,
Thyself mischieving to thine endless disease!
There was never so hard a storm of misery
But through Goodhope there may come remedy.
Magn. Your words be more sweeter than any precious nard,
They mollify so easily my heart that was so hard;
There is no balm, ne gum of Araby
More delectable than your language to me.

¹assaults.

²abode.

*want of hope.

Good. Sir, your physician is the grace of God,
 That you hath punished with his sharp rod.
Goodhope, your 'pothecary assigned am I:
 That God's grace hath vexed you sharply,
 And pained you with a purgation of odious poverty,
 Mixed with bitter aloes of hard adversity;
 Now must I make you an electuary soft,
 I to minister it, you to receive it oft;
 With rhubarb of repentance in you for to rest;
 With drams of devotion your diet must be drest;
 With gums ghostly of glad heart and mind,
 To thank God of his sond,¹ and comfort ye shall find.
 Put from you presumption and admit humility,
 And heartily thank God of your adversity;
 And love that Lord that for your love was dead,
 Wounded from the foot to the crown of the head:
 For who loveth God can ail nothing but good;
 He may help you, he may mend your mood:
 Prosperity by him is given solaciously to man,
 Adversity by him therewith now and then;
 Health of body his business to achieve,
 Disease and sickness his conscience to discribe,²
 Affliction and trouble to prove his patience,
 Contradiction to prove his sapience,
 Grace of assistance his measure to declare,
 Sometime to fall, another time to beware.
 And now ye have had, sir, a wonderous fall,
 To learn you hereafter for to beware withall.
 How say you, sir? can ye these words grope?
Magn. Yea, sir, now am I armed with goodhope,
 And sore I repent me of my wilfulness;
 I ask God mercy of my negligess,
 Under Goodhope enduring ever still,
 Me humbly committing unto God's will.
Good. Then shall you be soon delivered from distress,
 For now I see coming to youward Redress.

¹sending.²discover.

Stage 5. Scene 33

Here REDRESS comes in

Red. Christ be among you, and the Holy Ghost!

Good. He be your conduct, the Lord of mights most.

Red. Sir, is your patient anything amended?

Good. Yea, sir, he is sorry for that he hath offended.

Red. How feel you yourself, my friend? how is your mind?

Magn. A wretched man, sir, to my Maker unkind.

Red. Yea, but have ye repented with heart contrite?

Magn. Sir, the repentance I have no man can write.

Red. And have ye banished from you all despair?

Magn. Yea, wholly to Goodhope I have made my repara-

Good. Questionless he doth me assure

In goodhope alway for to endure.

Red. Then stand up, sir, in God's name!

And I trust to ratify and amend your fame.

Goodhope, I pray you with hearty affection
To send over to me Sad Circumspection.

Good. Sir, your request shall not be delayed.

[*He goes out.*

Red. Now surely, Magnificence, I am right well apayed

Of that I see you now in the state of grace;

Now shall ye be renewéd with solace:

Take now upon you this habiliment,

And to that I say give good advertisement.¹

[*MAGNIFICENCE takes the garment.*

Magn. To your request I shall be conformable.

Red. First, I say, with mind firm and stable

Determine to amend all your wanton excess,

And be ruled by me, which am called Redress.

Redress my name is, that little am I used

As the world requireth, but rather I am refused.

Redress should be at the reckoning in every account,

And specially to redress that were out of joint.

'heed.

Full many things there be that lacketh redress,
 The which were too long now to express;
 But redress is redless,¹ and may do no correction.
 Now welcome, forsooth, Sad Circumspection.

Stage 5. Scene 34

Here cometh in SAD CIRCUMSPECTION, saying:

Sad Cir. Sir, after your message I hied me hither straight,
 For to understand your pleasure and also your mind.

Red. Sir, to acquaint you the continue of my conceit,
 Is from adversity Magnificence to unbind.

Sad Cir. How fortuned you, Magnificence, so far to fall
 behind?

Magn. Sir, the long absence of you, Sad Circumspection,
 Caused me of adversity to fall in subjection.

Red. All that he saith, of truth doth proceed;
 For where Sad Circumspection is long out of the way,
 Of adversity it is to stand in drede.

Sad Cir. Without fail, sir, that is no nay;
 Circumspection inhateth all running astray.

But, sir, by me to rule first ye began.

Magn. My wilfulness, sir, excuse I ne can.

Sad Cir. Then ye of folly in times past you repent?

Magn. Soothly, to repent me I have great cause.
 Howbeit, from you I received a letter sent,

Which contained in it a special clause
 That I should use largesse.

Sad Cir. Nay, sir, there a pause.

Red. Yet let us see this matter thoroughly engrossed.

Magn. Sir, this letter ye sent to me, at Pontoise was enclosed.

¹powerless to act alone.

Sad Cir. Who brought you that letter, wote ye what he hight?

Magn. Largesse, sir, by his credence was his name.

Sad Cir. This letter ye speak of, never did I write.

Red. To give so hasty credence ye were much to blame.

Magn. Trith it is, sir; for after he wrought me much shame,

And caused me also to use too much Liberty,

And made also Measure to be put from me.

Red. Then Wealth with you might in no wise abide.

Sad Cir. Ah ha! Fancy and Folly met with you, I trow.

Red. It would be found so, if it were well tried.

Magn. Surely my wealth with them was overthrow.

Sad Cir. Remember you, therefore, how late ye were low.

Red. Yea, and beware of unhappy Abusion.

Sad Cir. And keep you from counterfeiting of Cloaked Collusion.

Magn. Sir, in Goodhope I am to amend.

Red. Use not then your countenance for to counterfeit.

Sad Cir. And from crafters and hafters I you forfend.

Stage 5. Scene 35

Here PERSEVERANCE comes in

Magn. Well, sir, after your councel my mind I will set.

Red. What, brother Perseverance! surely well met.

Sad Cir. Ye come hither as well as can be thought.

Per. I heard say that Adversity with Magnificence had fought.

Magn. Yea, sir, with Adversity I have been vexéd.

But Goodhope and Redress hath mended mine estate,
And Sad Circumspection to me they have annexéd.

Red. What this man hath said, perceive ye his sentence?¹

Magn. Yea, sir, from him my courage shall never flit.

Sad Cir. According to truth they be well deviséd.

¹Some considerable corruption here.

Full many things there be that lacketh redress,
 The which were too long now to express;
 But redress is redless,¹ and may do no correction.
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¹Some considerable corruption here.

MAGNIFICENCE

Magn. Sirs, I am agreed to abide your ordinance,
Faithful assurance with good peradverteance.

Per. If you be so minded, we be right glad.

Red. And ye shall have more worship than ever ye had.

Magn. Well, I perceive in you there is much sadness,
Gravity of counsel, providence, and wit;
Your comfortable advice and wit exceedeth all gladness.
But friendly I will refrain you further ere we flit,
Whereto were most meetly my corage to knit:
Your minds I beseech you herein to express,
Commencing this process at Maister Redress.

Red. Sith unto me foremost this process is erected,
Herein I will aforce me to shew you my mind.
First, from your magnificence, sin must be abjected,
In all your works more grace shall ye find;
Be gentle then of corage and learn to be kind,
For of nobleness the chief point is to be liberal.
So that your largesse be not too prodigal.

Sad Cir. Liberty to a lord belongeth of right,
But wilful waywardness must walk out of the way;
Measure of your lusts must have the oversight,
And not all the niggard nor the chinchard to play;
Let never niggardship your nobless affray;
In your rewards use such moderation
That nothing be given without consideration.

Per. To the increase of your honour then arm you with
right,
And fumously¹ address you with magnanimity;
And ever let the drede of God be in your sight;
And know yourself mortal, for all your dignity;

Set not all your affiance in Fortune full of guile;
Remember this life lasteth but a while.

¹ardently.

²Line missing.

Magn. Redress, in my remembrance your lesson shall rest,
And Sad Circumspection I mark in my mind:
But, Perseverance, meseemeth your problem was best;
I shall it never forget, nor leave it behind,
But wholly to Perseverance myself I will bind,
Of that I have misdone to make a redress,
And with Sad Circumspection correct my wantonness.

Red. Unto this process briefly compiléd,
Comprehending the world casual and transitory,
Who list to consider shall never be beguiled,
If it be registered well in memory;
A plain example of worldly vain-glory,
How in this world there is no sickerness,¹
But fallible flattery enmixed with bitterness.

Sad Cir. A mirror encircled is this interlude,
This life inconstant for to behold and see;
Suddenly advancéd, and suddenly subdued,
Suddenly riches, and suddenly poverty,
Suddenly comfort, and suddenly adversity;
Suddenly thus Fortune can both smile and frown,
Suddenly set up, and suddenly cast down.

Suddenly promoted, and suddenly put back,
Suddenly cherished, and suddenly cast aside,
Suddenly commended, and suddenly find a lack,
Suddenly granted, and suddenly denied,
Suddenly hid, and suddenly espied;
Suddenly thus Fortune can both smile and frown,
Suddenly set up, and suddenly cast down.

Per. This treatise, devisé to make your disport,
Sheweth nowadays how the world cumbered is,
To the pith of the matter who list to resort;
To-day it is well, to-morrow it is all amiss,
To-day in delight, to-morrow bare of bliss,

¹security.

To-day a lord, to-morrow lie in the dust:
Thus in the world there is no earthly trust.

To-day fair weather, to-morrow a stormy rage,
To-day hot, to-morrow outrageous cold,
To-day a yeoman, to-morrow made a page,
To-day in surety, to-morrow bought and sold,
To-day masterfist, to-morrow he hath no hold,
To-day a man, to-morrow he lieth in the dust:
Thus in this world there is no earthly trust.

Magn. This matter we have movéd, you mirthful to make,
Pressly purposéd under pretence of play,
Sheweth wisdom to them that wisdom can take,
How suddenly worldly wealth doth decay,
How wisdom through wantonness vanishes away,
How none estate living of himself can be sure,
For the wealth of this world cannot endure;

Of the terrest richery¹ we fall in the flood,
Beaten with storms of many a foward blast,
Ensorbéd with the waves savage and wood,²
Without our ship be sure, it is likely to brast,
Yet of magnificence oft made is the mast;
Thus none estate living of him can be sure,
For the wealth of this world cannot endure.

Red. Now seemeth us fitting that ye then resort
Home to your palace with joy and royalty.

Sad Cir. Where everything is ordained after your noble
port.

Per. There to endure with all felicity.

Magn. I am content, my friends, that it so be.

Red. And ye that have heard this disport and game,
Jesus preserve you from endless woe and shame!

Amen.

• ¹terrestrial riches?

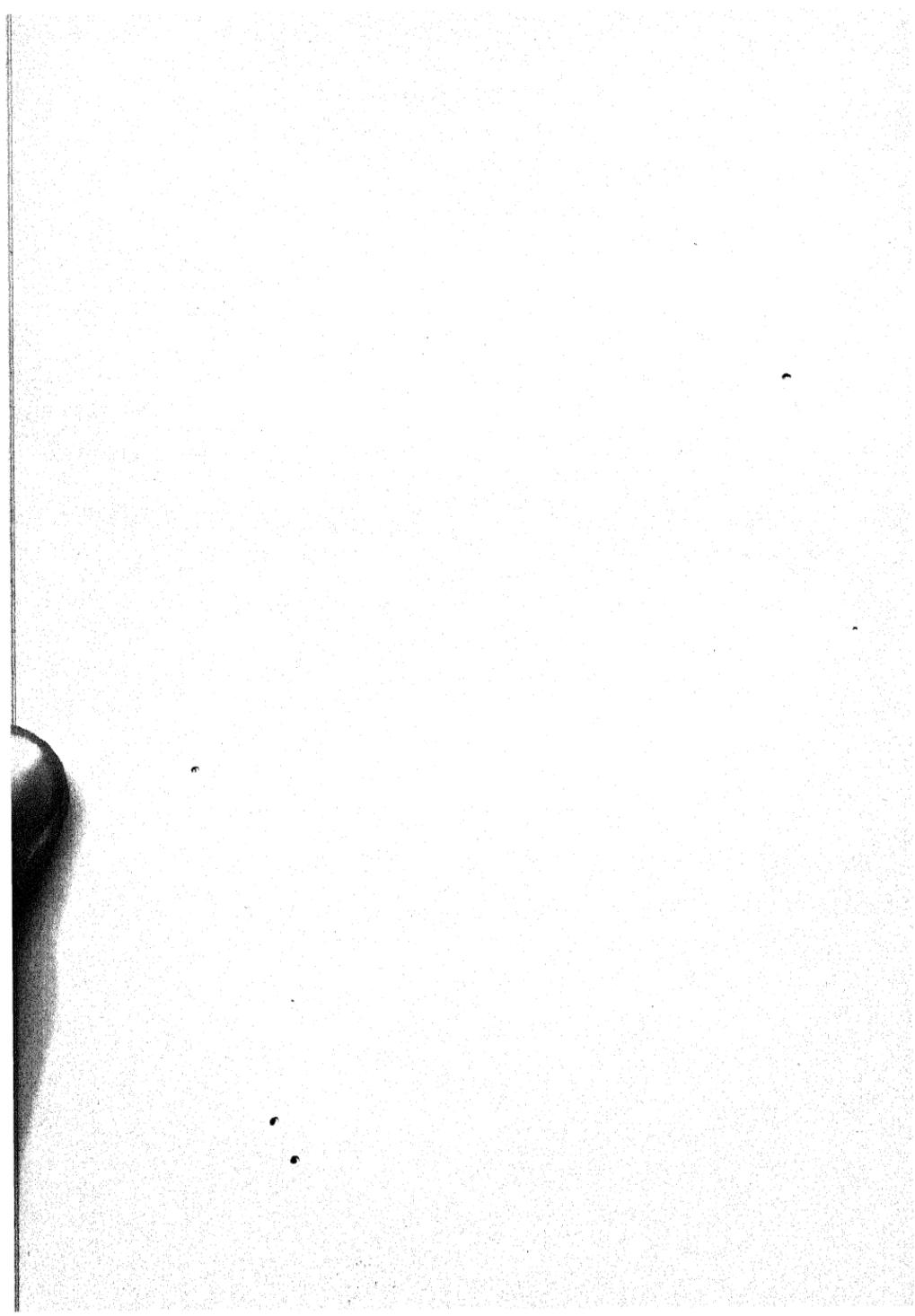
²wild.

CALLIOPE

Why wear ye Calliope embroidered with letters of gold?

Skelton Laureate, Orato. Reg., Maketh this Answer

Calliope,
As ye may see,
Regent is she
 Of poets all,
Which she gave to me
The high degree
Laureate to be
 Of fame royall;
Whose name enroll'd
With silk and gold
I dare be bold
 Thus for to wear.
Of her I hold
And her household;
Though I wax old
 And somedele sere,
Yet is she fain,
Void of disdain,
Me to retain
 Her serviture.
With her certain
I will remain,
As my sovereign
Most of pleasure,
Maulgre touz malheureux.



SPEAK, PARROT

*The Book compiled by Maister John Skelton, Poet Laureate,
called "Speak, Parrot"*

My name is Parrot, a bird of Paradise,
By nature devised of a wondrous kind,
Daintily dieted with divers delicate spice
Till Euphrates, that flood, driveth me into Ind,
Where men of that countrie by fortune me find
And send me to greatē ladyēs of estate:
Then Parrot must have an almond or a date.

A cage curiously carven, with a silver pin,
Properly¹ painted, to be my covverture;
A mirror of glass, that I may toot² therein:
These, maidens full meekly with many a divers flower,
Freshly they dress, and make sweet my bower,
With "Speak, Parrot, I pray you." Full curtesly they say,
"Parrot is a goodly bird, a pretty popinjay!"

With my beakē bent, my little wanton eye,
My feathers fresh as is the emerald green,
About my neck a circulet like the rich rubie,
My little legs, my feet bothfeat³ and clean,
I am a minion to wait upon a queen:
"My proper Parrot, my little pretty fool!"
With ladies I learn, and go with them to school.

"Ha! Ha! Ha! Parrot, ye can laugh prettily!"
Parrot hath not dinéd all this long day.
Like your puss-cat, Parrot can mew and cry!
In Latin, in Hebrew, Arabic and Chaldie,
In Greekē tongue Parrot can both speak and say

¹Handsomely.

²peep.

³neat.

(As Persius, that poet, doth report of me,
 “*Quis expeditivit psittaco suum chaire?*”¹⁾

Doucē French of Paris Parrot can learn,
 Pronouncing my purpose after my propertie,
 With “*Parlez bien, Parrot, ou parlez rien!*”
 With Dutch, with Spanish, my tongue can agree,
 In English to God Parrot can supplie²:
 “Christ save King Henry the Eighth, our royal king,
 The red rose in honour to flourish and spring!

With Katherine incomparable, our royal queen also,
 That peerless pomegranate, Christ save her noble grace!”
 Parrot *saves hablar Castiliano*,³
 With *fidarsi di se stesso** in Turkey and in Thrace;
Vis consilii expers, as teacheth me Horace,
Mole ruit sua,⁵ whose dictates are pregnant,
Soventez foys, Parrot, en souenaunte.

My lady mistress, Dame Philology,
 Gave me a gift, in my nest when I lay,
 To learn all language, and it to speak aptly
 ~ Now *pandez mory*, wax frantic, some men say,
 Phroneses for Freneses may not hold her way.
 An almond now for Parrot, delicately drest:
 In *Salve festa dies, toto* there doth best.⁶

Moderata juvant,⁷ but *toto* doth exceed:
 Discretion is mother of noble virtues all.

¹Who taught Parrot to say “Hallo”? Dyce notes: “The Latin portions of the MS. are generally of ludicrous incorrectness, the transcriber evidently not having understood the language.” I have done what I could with them.

²pray. ³can speak Castilian. ⁴trust in yourself.

⁵Strength without wisdom falls by its own weight.

⁶Perhaps this means, “When making holiday it is best to go the whole hog.” But, in the ordinary way, it is as the next line infers.

⁷Moderation delights us.

*Myden agan*¹ in Greekē tongue we read.
But reason and wit wanteth their provinciall
When wilfulness is vicar generall.

Haec res acu tangitur,² Parrot, *par moi foy*:
Ticez vous, Parrot, *tenez vous coy*!

Busy, busy, busy, and business again!
Que pensez vous, Parrot? what meaneth this business?

*Vitulus*³ in Horeb troubled Aaron's brain,
Melchizadek merciful made Moloch merciless:
Too wise is no virtue, too meddling, too restless.

In measure is treasure, *cum sensu maturato*,⁴
Ne tropo sanno, ne tropo mato.⁵

Aram was fired with Chaldee's fire called Ur,
Jobab⁶ was brought up in the land of Hus,
The lineage of Lot took support of Assur,
Jereboseth is Hebrew, who list the cause discuss –
“Peace, Parrot, ye prate as ye were *ebrius*⁷:
Hist thee, *lieber Got von Himmelsreich, ich seg*⁸!
In Popering grew pears when Parrot was an egg.”

What is this to purpose? “Over in a whinny Meg!”⁹
Hop Loblin of Lowdeon¹⁰ would hae a bit a' bread;
The jibbet of Baldock was made for Jack Leg¹¹;
An arrow unfeatheréd and without an head,
A bagpipe without blowing standeth in no stead:
Some run too far before, some run too far behind,
Some be too churlish, and some be too kind.

¹i.e. Μηδέν ἀγαν – Nothing in excess.

²i.e. This hits the nail on the head properly.

³The calf. ⁴with a mature perception.

⁵Not too sane, and not too mad. ⁶Job.

⁷drunk. ⁸i.e. sage – dear God of Heaven's kingdom, I say!

⁹The beginning of a ballad. ¹⁰Lothian.

¹¹Professor Berdan, of Yale University, suggests that this refers to John Lincoln, who was hanged in 1517 after the Evil May-day riot. (See *Modern Language Notes of America*, vol. xxx., 1915.)

Ich dien serveth for the ostrich feather,
Ich dien is the language of the land of Beme¹;
 In Afric tongue *byrsa* is a thong of leather;
 In Palestina there is Jerusaleme.
*Colostrum*² now for Parrot, white bread and sweet cream!
 Our Thomesen she doth trip, our jennet she doth shail³:
 Parrot hath a black beard and a fair green tail.

"Morish mine own shelf!" the costermonger saith,
 "Fate, fate, fate!"⁴ ye Irish waterlag;
 In flattering fables men find but little faith,
 But *moveatur terra*, let the world wag;
 Let Sir Wrig-wrag wrestle with Sir Dalyrag;
 Every man after his manner of ways,
Paub yn ei arver, so the Welchman says.

Such shreds of sentence, strewéd in the shop
 Of ancient Aristippus and such other mo,
 I gather together and close in my crop,
 Of my wanton conceit, *unde depromo*
Dilemmata docta in paedagogio
Sacro vatem,⁵ whereof to you I break –
 I pray you, let Parrot have liberty to speak!

But "Ware the cat, Parrot, ware the false cat!"
 With "Who is there – a maid? Nay, nay, I trow!"⁶
 "Ware riot, Parrot! Ware riot, ware that!"⁷
 "Meat, meat for Parrot, meat I say, ho!"
 Thus diverse of language by learning I grow,
 With "Buss me, ' sweet Parrot, buss me, sweet sweet!"⁸
 To dwell among ladyés Parrot is meet.

¹Bohemia.

²milk biestings.

³stumble.

⁴Water, water, water!

⁵whence I produce dilemmas taught to the poet in a sacred school (?).

⁶Refers to Evil May-day riot (?).

⁷Kiss me.

"Parrot, Parrot, Parrot, pretty popinjay!"

With my beak I can pick my little pretty toe;
My delight is solace, pleasure, disport, and play:
Like a wanton, when I will, I reel to and fro.

Parrot can say *Cæsar, ave!* also.
But Parrot hath no favour to Esebone¹:
Above all other birds, set Parrot alone.

• *Ulula, Esebon,* for Jeromy doth weep!

Zion is in sadness, Rachel ruly² doth look;
Madiionita Jethro, our Moses keepeth his sheep;
Gideon is gone, that Zalmane undertook,
Horeb et Zeb, of *Judicum*³ read the book:
Now Gebell, Amon, and Amaloch – "Hark, hark!
Parrot pretendeth to be a Bible clerk!"

O Esebon, Esebon! to thee is come again

Sihon, the regent *Amorraeorum*,⁴
And Og, that fat hog of Bashan, doth retain
The crafty *coistronus Cananaeorum*⁵;
And *asylum*,⁶ whilom *refugium miserorum*,⁷
Non fanum, sed profanum,⁸ standeth in little stead:
Ulula, Esebon, for Jephthah is stark dead!

Esebon, Maribon, Weston next Barnet;

A trim tram⁹ for an horse-mill it were a nice thing;

¹i.e. Heshbon, capital of Sihon, King of the Amorites – London (?).

²ruefully. ³Book of Judges.

⁴of the Amorites – Henry VIII (?). Josephus (4 *Ant. v. 3*) represents Og as Sihon's friend and ally.

⁵Canaanitish scullion. This must refer to Wolsey and Veysey, who were chiefly instrumental, with the King, in abolishing the right of sanctuary for those clergy guilty of capital crimes. This was regarded by the Church party (i.e. Skelton's party) as a betrayal of the Church. (Cf. Berdan, op. cit.)

⁶sanctuary. ⁷once the refuge of the unhappy.

⁸Not sacred, but profane. ⁹A trinket.

Daintie for damoiselles, chaffer far fet¹:

Bo-ho doth bark well, but Hough-ho he ruleth the ring;
 From Scarparie to Tartary renown therein doth spring,
 With "He said, and we said," ich wot now what ich wot² –
*Quod magnus est dominus Judas Scariot.*³

Ptolemy and Haly were cunning and wise

In the volvell,⁴ in the quadrant, and in the astroloby,
 To prognosticate truly the chance of Fortune's dice;
 Some treat of their tirykis, some of astrology,
 Some *pseudo-propheta* with chiromancy:
 If Fortune be friendly, and grace be the guide,
 Honour with renown will run on that side.

*Monon calon agaton,*⁵
Quod Parrato
In Graeco.

Let Parrot, I pray you, have liberty to prate,

For *aurea lingua Graeca*⁶ ought to be magnified,
 If it were conn'd perfitley, and after the rate,
 As *lingua Latina*,⁷ in school matter occupied.

But our Greekēs their Greek so well have applied
 That they cannot say in Greek, riding by the way,
 "Ho, hostler, fetch my horse a bottle of hay!"

Neither frame a syllogism in *phrisesomorum*,⁸

Formaliter et Graece, cum medio termino?
 Our Greekēs wallow in the wash-bowl *Argolicorum*¹⁰;
 For though they can tell in Greek what is *phormio*,¹¹
 Yet they seek out their Greek in *Capricornio*;

¹far-fetched merchandise. ²I know now what I know.

³But mighty is lord Judas Iscariot (probably Wolsey).

⁴a kind of astronomical clock.

⁵i.e. Μόνον καλὸν ἀγαθόν – the only beauty and goodness.

⁶the golden Greek tongue. ⁷the Latin tongue.

⁸in Friesland (?).

⁹Formally and in Greek, with the middle term.

¹⁰of the Greeks. ¹¹a straw-mat.

For ye scrape out good scripture, and set in a gall,
Ye go about to amend, and ye mar all.¹

Some argue *secundum quid ad simpliciter*,
And yet he would be reckon'd *pro Areopagita*²;
And some make distinctions *multiplicita*,
Whether *ita* were *non*, or *non* before *ita*,³
Neither wise nor well-learned, but like *hermaphrodita*⁴:
Set *sophia*⁵ aside, for every Jack Raker
And every mad meddler must now be a maker.⁶

In Academia Parrot dare no problem keep,
For *Graece fari*⁷ so occupieth the chair
That *Latinum fari* may fall to rest and sleep,
And *syllogisari*⁸ was drowned at Sturbridge Fair;
Trivials and quatrivials⁹ so sore now they impair¹⁰
That Parrot the popinjay hath pity to behold
How the rest of good learning is rolled up and trold.

Albertus de modo significandi,¹¹
And *Donatus*¹² be driven out of school;
Prisian's head broken now handy dandy,
And *Inter didascолос*¹³ is reckoned for a fool;
Alexander,¹⁴ a gander of Mæander's pool,
With *De Conciles*¹⁵ is cast out of the gate,
And *De Rationales*¹⁶ dare not shew his pate.

Plautus in his comedies a child shall now rehearse,
And meddle with Quintilian in his *Declamations*,

¹A reference to Erasmus' New Testament (?).

²as one of the senators or judges. ³i.e. quibbling distinctions.

⁴I suppose – neither one thing nor the other. ⁵wisdom.

⁶composer. ⁷to speak Greek. ⁸ability to reason, to syllogise.

⁹The two school-courses, elementary and advanced. (See p. 353, note.)

¹⁰are impaired.

¹¹Albertus' *Margarita Poetica*, a classical anthology (§472).

¹²A Latin grammar by Ælius Donatus. ¹³Another grammar (?).

¹⁴A mediaeval grammarian. ¹⁵The Canon law (?). ¹⁶i.e. Logic.

That Petty Caton¹ can scantily construe a verse,
 With *Aveto in Graeco*,² and such solemn salutations,
 Can scantily the tenses of his conjugations:
 Setting their minds so much on eloquence
 That of their school matters lost is the whole sentence.³

Now a nutmeg, a nutmeg, *cum garyophyllo*,
 For Parrot to pick upon, his brain for to stable,
 Sweet cinnamon-stickés and *pleris cum musco*!
 In Paradise, that place of pleasure perdurable,⁴
 The progeny of Parrots were fair and favourable;
 Now in *valle* Hebron Parrot is fain to feed:
 Christ-Cross and Saint Nicholas, Parrot, be your good
 speed!

The mirror that I toot in, *quasi diaphanum*,⁵
Vel quasi speculum, in aenigmate,⁶
Elencticum, or else *enthymematicum*,⁷
 For logicians to look on, somewhat *sophistice*⁸!
 Rhetoricians and orators in fresh humanitie,⁹
 Support Parrot, I pray you, with your suffrage ornate,
 Of *confuse tantum*¹⁰ avoiding the check-mate.

But of this supposition that calléd is art,
 Confuse *distributive*,¹¹ as Parrot hath devised,
 Let every man after his merit take his part,
 For in this process¹² Parrot nothing hath surmised,
 No matter pretended, nor nothing enterprised,
 But that *metaphora, allegoria* with all,
 Shall be his protection, his paves,¹³ and his wall.

¹*Cato Parvus* (a sort of supplement to *Cato Magnus*, i.e. *Dionysii Catonis Disticha de Moribus*) was written by Daniel Church, or Ecclesiensis, a domestic in the court of Henry II.

²Good-morning in Greek. ³meaning. ⁴everlasting.

⁵as though transparent. ⁶Or like a looking-glass in a riddle.

⁷An *elenchus* [in logic] . . . an *enthymeme*.

⁸wisely. ⁹elegant literature. ¹⁰so much confusion.

¹¹i.e. methodical confusion. ¹²discourse. ¹³shield.

For Parrot is no churlish chough, nor no fleckéd pie,
 Parrot is no pendugum,¹ that men call a carling,
 Parrot is no woodcock, nor no butterfly,
 Parrot is no stammering stare, that men call a starling:
 But Parrot is my own dear heart and my dear darling.
 Melpomene, that fair maid, she burnished his beak:
 I pray you, let Parrot have liberty to speak.

Parrot is a fair bird for a lady:
 God of his goodness him framéd and wrought;
 When Parrot is dead, he doth not putrify.
 Yet, all things mortal shall turn unto nought,
 Except man's soul, that Christ so dearè bought:
 That never may die, nor never die shall –
 Make much of Parrot, the popinjay royal.

For that peerless Prince that Parrot did create,
 He made you of nothing by his majestie.
 Point well this problem that Parrot doth prate,
 And remember among how Parrot and ye
 Shall leap from this life, as merry as we be:
 Pomp, pride, honour, riches, and worldly lust,
 Parrot saith plainly, shall turn all to dust.

Thus Parrot doth pray you,
 With heart most tender,
 To reckon with this recule² now,
 And it to remember.

*Psittacus, ecce, cano; nec sunt mea carmina Phæbo
 Digna scio; tamen est plena camena deo.*³

*Secundum Skeltonida famigeratum,
 In Pierorum catalogo numeratum.*⁴

¹penguin.

²writing.

³Parrot, lo, I sing; I know my songs are not worthy of Phoebus; yet the inspiration is full of the god.

⁴Next to the famed Skelton,
 Counted in the book of the Muses.

*Itaque consolamini invicem in verbis istis, etc.*¹

Candidi lectores, callide, callete: vestrum foyete Psittacum, etc.

GALATHEA

Speak, Parrot, I pray you, for Mary's sake,
What moan he made when Pamphilus lost his make.²

PARROT

My proper Bess,
My pretty Bess,
 Turn once again to me!
For sleepest thou, Bess,
Or wakest thou, Bess,
 Mine heart it is with thee.

My daisy delectable,
My primrose commendable,
My violet amiable,
My joy inexplicable,
 Now turn again to me.

I will be firm and stable,
And to your serviceable,
And also profitable,
If ye be agreeable
 To turn again to me,
 My proper Bess.

Alas, I am disdained,
And as a man half maimed,
My heart is so sore pained!
I pray thee, Bess, unfeigned,
 Yet come again to me!

¹"Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv. 18).

²Fair readers, be shrewdly wise: cherish your Parrot. ³mate.

By love I am constrained
 To be with you retained,
 It will not be refrained:
 I pray you, be reclaimed,
 And turn again to me,
 My proper Bess.

Quoth Parrot, the popinjay royal

*Martialis cecinit carmen, fit mihi scutum: —
 Est mihi lasciva pagina, vita proba.¹*

GALATHEA

Now kus² me, Parrot, kus me, kus, kus, kus!
 God's blessing light on thy sweet little mus³!

*Vita et anima,
 Zoe kai psyche.⁴*

Concubent Graece. Non est hic sermo pudicus.⁵

*Attica dictamina
 Sunt plumbi lamina,⁶
 Vel spuria vitulamina:
 Avertat haec Urania!
 Amen, Amen,
 And set too a D,
 And then it is Amend
 Our new found A.B.C.*

Cum caeteris paribus.⁷

¹Martial sang a song, made a shield for me:
 I have a sportive page, an honest life.

²kiss. ³beak.

⁴Life and soul,
 Life and soul (*Zωὴ καὶ ψυχὴ*).

⁵They lie together in Greek. This is not obscene talk.

⁶Attic sayings [?] are a sheet of lead [or, a shield].

⁷Other things being equal.

LENVOY PRIMERE

Go, little quaire,¹ naméd the Popinjay,
 Home to resort Jeroboseth persuade;
 For the cliffs of Scalop they roar wellaway,
 And the sands of Cefas begin to waste and fade,
 For replication restless that he of late there made:
 Now, Neptune and Æolus are agreed of likelihode,
 For Titus at Dover abideth in the rode;

Lucina she wadeth among the watery floodés,
 And the cocks begin to crow against the day;
*Le toison de Jason*² is lodgéd among the shrowdés,
 Of Argus revengéd, recover when he may;
 Lycaon³ of Libyk and Lydy hath caught his pray⁴:
 Go, little quaire, pray them that you behold
 In their remembrance ye may be enrolled.

Yet some fools say that ye are furnishéd with knacks,⁵
 That hang together as feathers in the wind;
 But lewdly are they lettered that your learning lacks,
 Barking and whining, like churlish curs of kind⁶:
 For who looketh wisely in your works may find
 Much fruitful matter. But now, for your defence
 Against all remords,⁷ arm you with patience.

¹book.

²Jason's golden fleece. A reference, perhaps, to the 400,000 crowns with which the French Commissioners came to purchase Tournai, captured in 1513. (See Berdan.)

³Who, for his impiety to Jupiter, was changed into a wolf. This probably refers to Wolsey. See later "His wolf's head, wan, blue as lead, gapeth over the crown."

⁴The bishopric of Tournai (?)

⁵toys.

⁶i.e. by nature.

⁷blamings.

MONOSTICHON

Ipse sagax aequi ceu verax nuntius ito.¹
Morda puros mal desires.² Portugues.

Penultimo die Octobris, 33°³

SECUNDE LENVOY

Pass forth, Parrot, towards some passenger,
 Require him to convey you over the salt foam;
 Addressing yourself, like a sad messenger,
 To our sullen seignor Sadok,⁴ desire him to come home,
 Making his pilgrimage by *nostre dame de Crome*:
 For Jerico and Jersey shall meet together as soon
 As he to exploit the man out of the moon.⁵

With porpoise and grampus he may feed him fat,
 Though he pamper not his paunch with the great seal:

¹ Himself wise in justice let him go like a true messenger.

² Dyce translates: "To bite the pure is an evil desire."

³ Professor Berdan conjectures that these figures stand for 1517 – i.e. dating from the accession of Henry VII, a habit that Skelton might have contracted as an old court-servant, again employed here to protect himself. As Dyce remarks, it is obvious that they could not refer to the year 1533, as by that time both Skelton and Wolsey were dead. Moreover, a few pages before, in the Harleian MS. 2252, from which these portions of *Speak, Parrot* are printed, there occurs the name "John Colyn, mercer, of London, 1517."

⁴ Wolsey (?). Berdan conjectures – Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester, who headed the embassy to the French court in November, 1518. (See date below.) If this is so, then do Jerico and Jersey, in the next line but one, refer to Paris and London? Zadok was one of the chief priests of Israel, but Sadoke (tenth book of *Morte D'Arthur*) was friend to young Aliander, as Somerset to Henry.

⁵i.e. as soon as he can drive the man out of the moon.

We have longéd and lookéd long time for that,
 Which causeth poor suitors have many a hungry meal:
 As president and regent he ruleth every deal.¹
 Now pass forth, good Parrot, our Lord be your steed,
 In this your journey to prosper and speed!

And though some disdain you, and say how ye prate,
 'And how your poems are barren of polished eloquence,
 There is none that your name will abrogate
 Than nodipolls² and gramatolls of small intelligence;
 Too rude is their reason to reach to your sentence³:
 Such melancholy mastiffs and mangy cur dogs
 Are meet for a swineherd to hunt after hogs.

MONOSTICHON

Psittace perge volans, fatuorum tela retundas.⁴
Morda puros mall desires. Portugues.

In diebus Novembris,

34.⁵

LE DEREYN LENVOY⁶

Prepare you, Parrot, bravely your passage to take,
 Of Mercury under the trinall aspect,
 And sadly salute our sullen sire Sydrake,⁷
 And shew him that all the world doth conject
 How the matters he mells in come to small effect;
 For he wanteth of his wits that all would rule alone:
 It is no little burden to bear a great mill-stone.

¹This surely refers to Wolsey. And yet Wolsey had the Great Seal in 1515!

²blockheads.

³meaning.

⁴Parrot, go flying, turn back the shafts of fatuity. ⁵1518 (?).

⁶From here on, at any rate, the personal satire is certainly directed against Wolsey.

⁷i.e. Wolsey. (Cf. *The Historie of King Boccus and Sydracke*, 1510.)

To bring all the sea into a cherrystone pit,
 To number all the stars in the firmament,
 To rule ix. realms by one man's wit,
 To such things impossible reason cannot consent:
 Much money, men say, there madly he hath spent –
 Parrot, ye may prate this under protestation,
 Was never such a senator since Christ's incarnation!

Wherefore he may now come again as he went,
 • *Non sine postica sanna*,¹ as I trow,
 From Calais to Dover, to Canterbury in Kent,
 To make reckoning in the resseyte how Robin lost his bow,
 To sow corn in the sea-sand, there will no croppé grow.
 Though ye be taunted, Parrot, with tongues attainted,
 Yet your problems are pregnant, and with loyalty acquainted.

MONOSTICHON

I, Properans Parrote, malas sic corripe linguas.
Morda puros mall desires. Portigues.
 15 Kalendis Decembris,

34.

DISTICHON MISERABILE

Altior, heu, cedro, crudelior, heu, leopardo!
*Heu, vitulus bubali fit dominus Priamil!*²

TETRASTICHON

*Unde species Priami est digna imperio.*³

Non annis licet et Priamus sed honore voceris:
Dum foveas vitulum, rex, regeris, Britonum;

¹i.e. Not without a grimace behind his back.

²Higher, alas, than the cedar, more cruel, alas, than the leopard!
 Alas, the calf of the ox becomes the lord of Priam!

³Whence the race of Priam is worthy of dominion.*

MAJOR SATIRES

*Rex, regeris, non ipse regis: res inclyte, calle;
Subde tibi vitulum, ne fatuet nimium.*¹

God amend all,
That all amend may!
Amen, quoth Parrot,
The royal popinjay.

Kalendris Decembris,

34.

LENVOY ROYAL

Go, proper Parrot, my popinjay,
That lords and ladies this pamphlet may behold,
With notable clerks: supplie² to them, I pray,
Your rudeness to pardon, and also that they wold
Vouchsafe to defend you against the brawling scold
Calléd Detraction, encankeréd with envy,
Whose tongue is attainted with slanderous obloquy.

For truth in parable ye wantonly pronounce,
Languages divers, yet under that doth rest
Matter more precious than the rich jacounce,³
Diamond, or ruby, or balas⁴ of the best,
Or Indy sapphire with orient pearlès drest:
Therefore your remorders are mad, or else stark blind,
You to remord erst ere they know your mind.

DISTICHON

*I, volitans, Parrote, tuam moderare Minervam:
Vix tua percipient, qui tua teque legent.*⁵

¹... While you cherish the calf, king of Britain, you are ruled: king, you are ruled, you do not yourself rule: illustrious king, be wise, Subdue thou the calf, lest he become too foolish.

²supplicate.

³jacinth.

⁴Another kind of ruby.

⁵Go, flying Parrot, moderate your wit:

Scarce will they understand you who read you and your writings.

HYPERBATON

*Psittacus hi notus seu Persius est puto notus,
Nec reor est nec erit licet est erit.¹*

Maledite soyte bouche malheurewse!

34.

LAUCTURE DE PARROT

O my Parrot, O unice dilecte, votorum meorum omnis lapis,
lapis pretiosus operimentum tuum!²

PARROT

*Sicut Aaron populumque, sic bubali vitulus, sic bubali vitulus,
sic bubali vitulus.³*

Thus much Parrot hath openly expressed:
Let see who dare make up the rest.

Le Popinjay sen va complayndre:

Helas! I lament the dull abuséd brain,
The infatuate fantasies, the witless wilfulness
Of one and other at me that have disdain:
Some say they cannot my parables express,
Some say I rail at riot reckless,
Some say but little, and think more in their thought,
How this process I prate of it is all for nought.

O causeless cowardice, O heartless hardness!
O manless manhood, enfainted all with fear!

¹Quite unintelligible.

²O only loved-one, the whole jewel of my prayers, a precious stone is thy covering. (Cf. Ezek. xxviii. 13.)

³As Aaron and the people, so the calf of the ox, etc.

O conning clergy, where is your readiness
 To practise or postil this process¹ here and there?
 For dread ye dare no meddle with such gere,
 Or else ye pinch courtesy, truly as I trow,
 Which of you first dare boldly pluck the crow.

The sky is cloudy, the coast is nothing clear;
 Titan hath trust up his tresses of fine gold;
 Jupiter for Saturn dare make no royal cheer;
 Lycaon laugheth thereat, and beareth him more bold;
 Rachel, ruelly ragged, she is like to catch cold;
 Moloch, that mawmet,² there dare no man withstay –
 The rest of such reckoning may make a foul fray.

Dixit, quod Parrot, the royal popinjay.

*C'est chose malheureuse,
 Que mal bouche.*

PARROT

*Jupiter ut nitido deus est veneratus Olympo,
 Hic coliturque deus.
 Sunt data thura Jovi, rutilo solio residenti;
 Cum Jove thura capit.
 Jupiter astrorum rector dominusque polorum,
 Anglica sceptra regit.³*

GALATHEA

I compass the conveyance unto the capitall
 Of our clerk Cleros, whither, thither, and why not
 hither?

¹annotate this matter. ²i.e. Mahomet, or puppet.

³As Jove is venerated in shining Olympus, he is worshipped here as a god. Incense is given to Jove, sitting on his ruddy throne; with Jove he takes the incense. Jove, ruler of the stars and lord of the poles, rules the English kingdom.

For pass a pace apace¹ is gone to catch a moll,
 Over Scarpary *mala vi*, Monsire cry and slither:
 What sequel shall follow when penguins meet toghether?
 Speak, Parrot, my sweet bird, and ye shall have a date,
 Of franticness and foolishness which is the great state?

PARROT

Difficult it is to answer this demand:
 Yet, after the sagacity of a popinjay, —
 Franticness doth rule and all thing command;
 Wilfulness and brainless now rule all the ray²;
 Against frantic frenzy there dare no man say nay,
 For franticness and wilfulness, and brainless ensemble,
 The neb of a lion they make to trete³ and tremble;

To jumble, to stumble, to tumble down like fools,
 To lour, to droop, to kneel, to stoop, and to play couch
 quail,
 To fish afore the net and to draw pools;
 He maketh them to bear baubles, and to bear a low sail;
 He carrieth a king in his sleeve, if all the world fail;
 He faceth out at a flush⁴ with "Shew, take all!"
 Of Pope Julius' cards he is chief cardinal.

He triumpeth, he trumpeth, he turneth all up and down,
 With "Skirgalliard,⁵ proud palliard,⁶ vauntpeler," ye
 prate!"
 His wolf's head, wan, blue as lead, gapeth over the crown:
 It is to fear lest he would wear the garland on his pate,
 Paregal with all princes far passing his estate:
 For of our regent the regiment he hath, *ex qua vi*,
Patet per versus, quod *ex vi botte harvi*.⁸

¹An allusion to Secretary Pace (?). ²array. ³become tractable.

⁴He vaunts it with a hand of cards all of one suit.

⁵lecher.

⁶whoremonger.

⁷One that is too forward to speak. ⁸Unintelligible.

Now, Galathea, let Parrot, I pray you, have his date;
 Ye dates now are dainty, and wax very scant,
 For grocers were grugéd at and groinéd at¹ but late;
 Great raisins with reasons be now reprobitant,
 For raisins are no reasons, but reasons currant:
 Run God, run Devil! yet the date of our Lord
 And the date of the Devil doth shrewdlie accord.

Dixit, quod Parrot, the popinjay royal.

GALATHEA

Now, Parrot, my sweet bird, speak out yet once again,
 Set aside all sophisms, and speak now true and plain.

PARROT

So many moral matters, and so little used;
 So much new making,² and so mad time spent;
 So much translation into English confused;
 So much noble preaching, and so little amendment;
 — So much consultation, almost to none intent;
 So much provision, and so little wit at need —
 Since Deucalion's flood there can no clerkés read.

So little discretion, and so much reasoning;
 So much hardy dardy, and so little manliness;
 So prodigal expence, and so shameful reckoning;
 So gorgeous garments, and so much wretchedness;
 So much portly pride, with purses penniless;
 So much spent before, and so much unpaid behind —
 Since Deucalion's flood there can no clerkés find.

So much forcasting, and so far an after deal;
 So much politic prating, and so little standeth in stead;

¹grumbled at.

²new composing.

So little secretness, and so much great council;
 So many bold barons, their hearts as dull as lead;
 So many noble bodies under a daw's head;
 So royal a king as reigneth upon us all –
 Since Deucalion's flood was never seen nor shall.

So many complaints, and so small redress;
 So much calling on, and so small taking heed;
 So much loss of merchandise, and so remediless;
 So little care for the common weal, and so much need;
 So much doubtful danger, and so little drede;
 So much pride of prelates, so cruell and so keen –
 Since Deucalion's flood, I trow, was never seen.

So many thieves hangéd, and thieves never the less;
 So much 'prisonment for matters not worth an haw;
 So much papers wering for right a small excess¹;
 So much pillory-pageants under colour of good law;
 So much turning on the cuck-stool² for every guy gaw;
 So much mockish making of statutes of array –
 Since Deucalion's flood was never, I dare say.

So brainless calvés heads, so many sheepés tails;
 So bold a bragging butcher,³ and flesh sold so dear;
 So many plucked partridges, and so fat quails;
 So mangy a mastiff cur, the great greyhound's⁴ peer;
 So big a bulk of brow-antlers cabbidgéd⁵ that year;
 So many swans dead, and so small revell –
 Since Deucalion's flood, I trow, no man can tell.

So many truces taken, and so little perfite truth;
 So much belly-joy, and so wasteful banqueting;

¹offence.

²stool fixed at the end of a long pole, used for punishment of scolds and brawlers by plunging them into water.

³Wolsey was reported to be the son of a butcher.

⁴Henry VIII, in allusion to the royal arms.

⁵cuckold's horns growing on the head.

So pinching and sparing, and so little profit growth;
 So many hugy houses building, and so small householding;
 Such statutes upon diets, such pilling and polling;
 So is all thing wrought wilfully without reason and skill —
 Since Deucalion's flood the world was never so ill.

So many vagabonds, so many beggars bold;
 So much decay of monasteries and of religious places;
 So hot hatred against the Church, and charity so cold;
 So much of "my Lord's Grace,"¹ and in him no graces;
 So many hollow hearts, and so double faces;
 So much sanctuary-breaking, and privileges barréed —
 Since Deucalion's flood was never seen nor learnéd.

So much ragged right of a rammés horn²;
 So rigorous ruling in a prelate specially;
 So bold and so bragging, and was so basely born;
 So lordly in his looks and so disdainfully;
 So fat a maggot, bred of a fleshé fly;
 Was never such filthy Gorgon, nor such an epicure,
 Since Deucalion's flood, I make thee fast and sure.

So much privy watching in cold winters' nights;
 So much searching of loselles, and is himself so lewd;
 So much conjurations for èlfish mid-day sprites;
 So many bullés of pardon publishéd and shewed;
 So much crossing and blessing, and him all beshrewd;
 Such pole-axes and pillars,³ such mules trapt with gold —
 Since Deucalion's flood in no chronicle is told.

Dixit, quod Parrot.

¹At this time "His Grace" was the royal style, so that it was a great piece of arrogance for Wolsey to adopt it.

²i.e. justice as crooked as a ram's horn.

³A reference to the two silver pillars and four gilt pole-axes that Wolsey had carried before him in his train as he rode on his mule through the streets. (See Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*.)

*Crescit in immensum me vivo Psittacus iste;
Hinc mea dicetur Skeltonidis inclita fama.¹*

*Quod Skelton Laureat,
Orator Regius.*

34.

¹This Parrot will grow immensely in my lifetime;
Hence the glorious fame of me, Skelton, will be celebrated.

COLIN CLOUT¹

*Hereafter followeth a little Book called Colin Clout, compiled by
MASTER SKELTON, Poet Laureate*

*Quis consurget tecum adversus malignantes? Aut quis
stabit tecum adversus operantes iniquitatem? Nemo, Domine! ²*

What can it avail
To drive forth a snail,
Or to make a sail
Of an herring's tail?
To rhyme or to rail,
To write or to indite,
Either for delight
Or else for despight?
Or books to compile
Of divers manner style,
Vice to revile
And sin to exile?
To teach or to preach,
As reason will reach?
Say this, and say that,
His head is so fat,
He wotteth never what
Nor whereof he speaketh;
He crieth and he creaketh,
He prieth and he peeketh,
He chides and he chatters,
He prates and he patters,

¹ A familiar name for the labourer of that day, either rural or town-bred.

² "Who will rise up with me against evil-doers? or who will stand up with me against the workers of iniquity? No one, O Lord!" (Ps. xciii. 16, Vulgate).

He clitters and he clatters,
 He meddles and he smatters,
 He gloses and he flatters;
 Or if he speak plain,
 Then he lacketh brain,
 He is but a fool;
 Let him go to school,
 On a three-footed stool
 That he may down sit,
 For he lacketh wit!
 And if that he hit
 The nail on the head,
 It standeth in no stead.
 The Devil, they say, is dead
 The Devil is dead!

It may well so be,
 Or else they would see
 Otherwise, and flee
 From worldly vanities,
 And foul covetousness,
 And other wretchedness,
 Fickle falseness,
 Variableness,
 With unstableness.

And if ye stand in doubt
 Who brought this rhyme about,
 My name is Colin Clout.
 I purpose to shake out
 All my conning bag,¹
 Like a clerkly hag.²
 For though my rhyme be ragged,
 Tattered and jagged,
 Rudely rain-beaten,
 Rusty and moth-eaten,

¹store of knowledge.

²old scholar (here).

If ye take well therewith,
 It hath in it some pith.
 For, as far as I can see,
 It is wrong with each degree:
 For the temporalitie
 Accuseth the spiritualitie;
 The spiritual again
 Doth grudge and complain
 Upon the temporal men:
 Thus each of other bloter
 The one against the other:
 'Alas, they make me shudder !
 For in hugger-mugger
 The Church is put in fault;
 The prelates be so haut,
 They say, and look so high,
 As though they would fly
 Above the starry sky.

Lay men say indeed
 How they take no heed
 Their silly sheep to feed,
 But pluck away and pull
 The fleeces of their wool, —
 Unneth¹ they leave a lock
 Of wool among their flock!
 And as for their conning,²
 A glomming and a mumming,³
 And make thereof a jape⁴!
 They gasp and they gape
 All to have promotion, —
 There is their whole devotion:
 With money, if it will hap,
 To catch the forkéd cap⁵:
 Forsooth they are too lewd
 To say so, all beshrewed!

¹Scarcely.

²learning.

³i.e. it is all dumb show.

⁴joke.

⁵i.e. the mitre.

What trow ye they say more
 Of the bishops' lore?
 How in matters they be raw,
 They lumber forth the law,
 To hearken Jack and Jill,
 When they put up a bill,¹
 And judge it as they will,
 For other men's skill,
 Expounding out their clauses,
 And leave their own causes.
 In their provincial cure
 They make but little sure,
 And meddle very light
 In the Church's right;
 But *ire* and *venire*,
 And sol-fa so a-la-mi-re,
 That the praemunire
 Is like to be set afire
 In their jurisdictions
 Through temporal afflictions.
 Men say they have prescriptions
 Against spiritual contradictions,
 Accounting them as fictions!

And while the heads do this,
 The remnant is amiss
 Of the clergy all,
 Both great and small.
 I wot never how they wark,
 But thus the people bark,
 And surely thus they say:
 Bishops, if they may,
 Small houses woulde keep,
 Not slumber forth and sleep,²
 And essay to creep
 Within the noble walls

¹a text (here).

²sleep away from their residences.

Of the king's halls,
To fat their bodies full,
Their souls lean and dull,
And have full little care
How evil their sheep fare!

The temporality say plain,
How bishops disdain
Sermons for to make,
Or such labour to take.
And, for to say troth,
A great part is for sloth,
But the greatest part
Is they have little art
And right slender conning
Within their heads wonning.¹
But this reason they take:
How they are able to make
With their gold and treasure
Clerks out of measure, —
And yet that is a pleasure!
Howbeit some there be
(Almost two or three)
Of that dignitie,
Full worshipful clerks,
As appeareth by their warks,
Like Aaron and Ure,²
The wolf from the door
To werrin³ and to keep
From their ghostly sheep,
And their spiritual lambs
Sequestered from rams
And from the bearded goats
With their hairy coats,
Set nought by gold ne groats, —
Their names if I durst tell!

¹dwelling.

²i.e. Urias.

³ward off.

But they are loth to mell,
 And loth to hang the bell
 About the cat's neck,²
 For dread to have a check;
 They are fain to play deuz deck³!
 They are made for the beck⁴!
 Howbeit they are good men,
 Much hearted like a hen⁵!
 Their lessons forgotten they have
 That Becket them gave:
Thomas manum mittit ad fortia,
Spernit damna, spernit opprobria,
*Nulla Thomam frangit injuria!*⁶
 But now every spiritual father,
 Men say, they had rather
 Spend much of their share
 Than be 'cumbered with care.
 Spend! nay, nay, but spare!
 For let see who that dare
 Shoe the mockish mare⁷;
 They make her wince and kick,
 But it is not worth a leek:
 Boldness is to seek⁸
 The Church for to defend.
 Take me as I intend,
 For loth I am to offend
 In this that I have penn'd:
 I tell you as men say.

¹interfere.²i.e. loth to warn their congregations against the most corrupt prelates.³A card-game. ⁴nod of command. ⁵i.e. chicken-hearted.⁶... puts his hand to braver things,
 Spurns loss, spurns dishonour,
 No hurt daunts Thomas.⁷Shoe-the-Mare was a Christmas game – a kind of Blindman's Buff. Here it seems to mean: Catch the chief offender.⁸far to seek.

Amend when ye may,
 For, *usque ad montem Seir*,¹
 Men say ye cannot appeire!²
 For some say ye hunt in parks,
 And hawk on hobby larks,³
 And other wanton warks,
 When the night darks.

What hath lay men to do
 The gray goose for to shoe?⁴
 Like hounds of hell,
 They cry and they yell,
 How that ye sell
 The grace of the Holy Ghost!
 Thus they make their boast
 Throughout every coast,
 How some of you do eat
 In Lenten season flesh meat,
 Pheasant, partridge, and cranes;
 Men call you, therefore, profanes!
 Ye pick no shrimps nor praines,⁵
 Salt-fish, stock-fish, nor herring,
 It is not for your wearing;⁶
 Nor in holy Lenten season
 Ye will neither beans ne peason,⁷
 But ye look to be let loose
 To a pig or to a goose;
 Your gorge not endewed,⁸
 Without a capon stewed,
 Or a stewed cock,
 To know what is a' clock
 Under her surfled⁹ smock,
 And her wanton woodcock!

¹"even as far as Mount Seir" (Joshua xv. 10).

²be worse than ye are already.

³hawk at larks with a hobby — i.e. a small hawk.

⁴i.e. meddle in everything — a proverbial expression.

⁵prawns. • ⁶use. ⁷peas. ⁸digested. ⁹embroidered.

And how when ye give orders
 In your provincial borders,
 As at *Sitientes*,¹
 Some are *insufficietes*,²
 Some *parum sapientes*,³
 Some *nihil intelligentes*,⁴
 Some *valde negligentes*,⁵
 Some *nullum sensum habentes*,⁶
 But bestial and untaught.
 But when they have once caught
Dominus vobiscum by the head,⁷
 Then run they in every stead,⁸
 God wot, with drunken nolls!⁹
 Yet take they cure of souls,
 And wotteth never what they read,
 Paternoster, Ave, nor Creed;
 Construe not worth a whistle
 Neither Gospel nor Epistle;
 Their matins madly said,
 Nothing devoutly prayed;
 Their learning is so small,
 Their primes and hours¹⁰ fall
 And leap out of their lips
 Like sawdust or dry chips!
 I speak not now of all,
 But the most part in generall.
 Of such vagabundus¹¹
 Speaketh *totus mundus*¹²;
 How some sing *Laetabundus*
 At every ale stake,¹³
 With, "Welcome, hake and make"¹⁴!"

¹i.e. at mass — particularly on Passion Sunday. ²ineffectual.

³not sufficiently learned. ⁴not even competent.

⁵utterly careless. ⁶having no sense at all.

⁷when they have once become priests. ⁸place. ⁹noddles.

¹⁰i.e. devotions and prayers. ¹¹vagabonds. •

¹²all the world. ¹³ale-sign.

¹⁴idle loitering companions (here, "wanton lasses").

By the bread that God brake,
 I am sorry for your sake!
 I speak not of the good wife,
 But of their apostles' life¹:
Cum ipsis vel illis
Qui manet in villis
Est uxor vel ancilla² -
 Welcome Jack and Jilla!
 My pretty Petronilla,
 An you will be stilla,
 You shall have your willa!
 Of such Paternoster pekes³
 All the world speaks.

In you the fault is supposed,
 For that they are not apposed,
 By just examination
 In conning and conversation;
 They have none instruction
 To make a true construction,
 A priest without a letter,
 Without his virtue be gretter,
 Doubtless were much better
 Upon him for to take
 A mattock or a rake.
 Alas, for very shame!
 Some cannot decline their name,
 Some can scarcely read,
 And yet he will not dread
 For to keep a cure,
 And in nothing is sure!
 This *Dominus vobiscum*,
 As wise as Tom a' thrum,

¹i.e. of the lives of *their* (the priests') followers.

²With those very fellows [i.e. prelates] who live in villas is a wife
or a maid.

³clerical fellows.

⁴questioned.

⁵illiterate.

A chaplain of trust
Layeth all in the dust!

Thus I, Colin Clout,
As I go about,
And wand'ring as I walk
I hear the people talk.
Men say, for silver and gold
Mitres are bought and sold;
There shall no clergy appose¹
A mitre nor a crose,²
But a full purse:
A straw for God's curse!
What are they the worse?
For a simoniac
Is but a hermoniac;
And no more ye make
Of simony, men say,
But a child's play!

Over this, the foresaid lay,
Report how the Pope may
An holy anchor³ call
Out of the stony wall,
And him a bishop make,
If he on him dare take
To keep so hard a rule
To ride upon a mule⁴
With gold all betrapped,
In purple and pall⁵ belapped;
Some hatted and some capped,
Richly and warm bewrapped,
(God wot to their great pains!)
In rochets⁶ of fine Rennes,
White as morrow's milk;

¹no learning procure.

²crosier.

³anchorite.

⁴This passage refers directly to Wolsey.

⁵rich trappings.

⁶frocks of fine lawn - here, of Rennes linen - worn by prelates.

Their tabards¹ of fine silk,
 Their stirrups with gold begared²:
 There may no cost be spared.
 Their mules gold do eat:
 Their neighbours die for meat.

What care they though Jill sweat,
 Or Jack of the Noke?
 The poor people they yoke
 With summons and citations
 And excommunications,
 About churches and market.
 The bishop on his carpet
 At home full soft doth sit.
 This is a farly fit,³
 To hear the people jangle,
 How warly⁴ they wrangle!
 Alas, why do ye not handle
 And them all to-mangle?
 Full falsely on you they lie,
 And shamefully you ascry,⁵
 And say as untruly
 That a butterfly
 (A man might say in mock)
 Were the weathercock
 Of the steeple of Poulés⁶!
 And thus they hurt their soulés
 In slandering you for truth.
 Alas, it is great ruth!
 Some say ye sit in thronés,
 Like princes *aquilonis*,⁷
 And shrine your rotten bones
 With pearls and precious stones;
 But how the commons groans,

¹mantles.

²adorned.

³strange story

⁴In how war-like a manner.

⁵call out against.

⁶Paul's.

⁷Lucifers.

And the people moans
 For prestēs¹ and for loans
 Lent and never paid,²
 But from day to day delayed,
 The commonwealth decayed,
 Men say ye are tongue-tayed,³
 And thereof speak nothing
 But dissimuling and glosing.
 Wherefore men be supposing
 That ye give shrewd counsell
 Against the common well,
 By polling and pillage⁴
 In cities and village.
 By taxing and tollage,
 Ye make monks to have the culerage⁵
 For⁶ covering of an old cottage,
 That committed is a college
 In the charter of dotage,
Tenure par service de sottage,
 And not *par service de socage*,⁷
 After old seigneurs,
 And the learning of Littleton's⁸ *Tenures*.
 Ye have so overthwarted,
 That good laws are subverted,
 And good reason perverted.

Religious men are fain
 For to turn again
In secula seculorum,⁹
 And to forsake their quorum
 And *vagabundare per forum*,¹⁰

¹i.e. forced advances. ²i.e. paid back. ³tongue-tied.

⁴cheating and robbing. ⁵i.e. piles. ⁶i.e. For want of.

⁷i.e. held for being sots and not as payment for labours done.

⁸A lawyer temp. Edward IV. He wrote a book known as Littleton's *Tenures*.

⁹To secular pursuits. ¹⁰to wander through the market-place.

And take a fine *meritorum*,
Contra regulam morum,
Aut black monachorum,
Aut canonicorum,
Aut Bernardinorum,
Aut crucifixorum,¹
 And to sing from place to place,
 Like apostataas.

And the selfsame game
 Begone is now with shame
 Amongst the silly nuns:
 My lady now she runs,
 Dame Sibyl our abbess,
 Dame Dorothy and lady Bess,
 Dame Sara our prioress,
 Out of their cloister and quere²
 With an heavy cheer,
 Must cast up their black veils
 And set up their fuck-sails,³
 To catch wind with their ventales —
 What, Colin, there thou shales⁴!
 Yet thus with ill-hails⁵
 The lay people rails.

And all the fault they lay
 On your precept,⁶ and say
 Ye do them wrong and no right

¹to beg, or work for money, contrary to the rule of their order, and contrary to the canons of the Benedictines, or of the Cistercians, or of . . . [?].

²choir.

³foresails — fashionable, lay head-dress.

⁴stumbles.

⁵unhealthily.

⁶So MS. Dyce has “you prelates.” But the former reading seems to be justified, as all the following passage (as well as much of the foregoing) would seem to refer to Wolsey’s suppression of the smaller monasteries. So that here the satire would be levelled directly at him.

To put them thus to flight;
No matins at midnight,
Book and chalice gone quite;
And pluck away the leads
Even over their heads,
And sell away their bells,
And all that they have else!
Thus the people tells,
Rails like rebels,
Redes shrewdly and spells,¹
And with foundations mells,²
And talks like titivells,³
How ye brake the dead's wills,
Turn monasteries into water-mills;
Of an abbey ye make a grange
(Your works, they say, are strange)
So that their founders' souls
Have lost their bead-rolls,⁴
The money for their masses
Spent among wanton lasses;
The *Diriges* are forgotten;
Their founders lie there rotten!
But where their soulés dwell,
Therewith I will not mell.
What could the Turk do more
With all his falsè lore,
Turk, Saracen, or Jew?
I report me to you,
O merciful Jesu!
You support and rescue,
My style for to direct,
It may take some effect!
For I abhor to write
How the laity dispight
You prelates, that of right

¹Talks . . . preaches.

²meddles.

³worthless knaves.
⁴prayers.

Should be lanterns of light.
 Ye live, they say, in delight,
 Drown'd in *deliciis*,
In gloria et divitiis,
In admirabili honore,
In gloria et splendore
Fulgurantis hastae,
*Viventes parum caste.*¹
 Yet sweet meat hath sour sauce:
 For after *gloria, laus*,²
 Christ by crueltie
 Was nailed upon a tree;
 He paid a bitter pension
 For man's redemption;
 He drank eisel³ and gall
 To redeem us withal;
 But sweet hippocras ye drink,
 With, "Let the cat wink!"
 I wot what each other think!
 Howbeit, *per assimile*,⁴
 Some men think that ye
 Shall have penaltie
 For your iniquitie.
 Note what I say,
 And bear it well away.
 If it please not theologues,
 It is good for astrologues:
 For Ptolemy told me
 The sun sometime to be
In Ariete

¹... in luxury,
 In glory and riches,
 In amazing state,
 In pomp and magnificence
 With splendid possessions,
 Living unchastely.

²glory, praise.

³vinegar.

⁴in like manner.

Ascendant a degree,
 When Scorpion descending
 Was so then portending
 A fatal fall of one¹
 That should sit on a throne,
 And rule all things alone.
 Your teeth whet on this bone
 Amongst you every one,
 And let Colin Clout have none
 Manner of cause to moan!
 Lay salve to your own sore,
 For else, as I said before,
 After *gloria, laus,*
 May come a sour sauce.
 Sorry therefore am I,
 But truth can never lie!

With language thus polluted
 Holy Church is bruted
 And shamefully confuted.
 My pen now will I sharp,
 And wrest² up my harp
 With sharp twinkling trebles,
 Against all such rebels
 That labour to confound
 And bring the Church to the ground;
 As ye may daily see
 How the laitie
 Of one affinitie
 Consent and agree
 Against the Church to be,
 And the dignitie
 Of the bishops' see.

¹i.e. Wolsey. This passage used to be known as "Skelton's Prophecy."

²tune.

MAJOR SATIRES

And either ye be too bad,
 Or else they are mad
 Of this to report.
 But, under your support,
 Till my dying day
 I shall both write and say,
 And ye shall do the same,
 How they are to blame
 You thus to defame:
 For it maketh me sad
 How that the people are glad
 The Church to deprave;
 And some there are that rave,
 Presuming on their wit,
 When there is never a whit
 To maintain arguments
 Against the sacraments.

Some make epiloguation
 Of high predestination;
 And of recidivation
 They make interpretation
 Of an awkward fashion;
 And of the prescience
 Of divine essence;
 And what hypostasis
 Of Christ's manhood is.
 Such logic men will chop,
 And in their fury hop,
 When the good ale sop
 Doth dance in their fore top¹!
 Both women and men,
 Such ye may well know and ken,
 That against priesthode
 Their malice spread abrode,
 Railing heinously

¹heads.

And disdainously
Of priestly dignities,
And their malignities.

And some have a smack
Of Luther's sack,
And a burning spark
Of Luther's wark,
And are somewhat suspect
In Luther's sect;
And some of them bark,
Clatter and carp
Of that heresiarch
Called Wicliffista,
The devilish dogmatista;
And some be Russians,
And some be Arians,¹
And some be Pelagians,
And make much variance
Between the clergy
And the temporalty,
How the Church hath too mickle,
And they have too little,
And bring in materialities
And qualified qualities
Of pluralities,
Of trialties,²
And of tot quots³
They commune like sots,
As cometh to their lots;
Of prebendaries and deans,
How some of them gleans
And gathereth up the store
For to catch more and more;
Of parsons and vicaries
They make many outcries —

¹followers of Arius.

²triple benefices.

³dispensations.

They cannot keep their wives
 From them for their lives!
 And thus the losells¹ strives,
 And lewdly says by Christ
 Against the silly priest.
 Alas, and well away,
 What ails them thus to say?
 They might be better advised
 Than to be so disguised²!
 But they have enterprised,
 And shamefully surmised,
 How prelacy is sold and bought,
 And come up of nought;
 And where the prelates be
 Come of low degree,
 And set in majestie
 And spiritual dignitie,
 Farewell benignitie,
 Farewell simplicitie,
 Farewell humilitie,
 Farewell good charitie!

Ye are so puffed with pride,
 That no man may abide
 Your high and lordly looks:
 Ye cast up then your books,
 And virtue is forgotten;
 For then ye will be wroken³
 Of every light quarrel,
 And call a lord a javel,⁴
 A knight a knave ye make;
 Ye boast, ye face, ye crake,⁵
 And upon you ye take
 To rule both king and kayser⁶;
 And if ye may have layser,⁷

¹worthless fellows. ²behave so badly. ³revenged. ⁴knavie.
⁵face it out and vaunt. ⁶emperor. ⁷leisure.

Ye will bring all to nought,
 And that is all your thought!¹
 For the lords temporal,
 Their rule is very small,
 Almost nothing at all.
 Men say how ye appal
 The noble blood royal.
 In earnest and in game,
 Ye are the less to blame,
 For lords of noble blood,
 If they well understood
 How conning might them advance,
 They would pipe you another dance.
 But noblemen born
 To learn they have scorn,
 But hunt and blow an horn,
 Leap over lakes and dykes,
 Set nothing by politics!
 Therefore ye keep them base,
 And mock them to their face.
 This is a piteous case!
 To you that be on the wheel²
 Great lords must crouch and kneel,
 And break their hose at the knee,
 As daily men may see,
 And to remembrance call:
 Fortune so turneth the ball
 And ruleth so over all,
 That honour hath a great fall.

Shall I tell you more? yea, shall.
 I am loth to tell all;
 But the commonalty you call
 Idols of Babylon,
De Terra Zabulon,

¹This refers to Wolsey, of course.

²i.e. atop of Fortune's wheel.

De Terra Neptalm;
 For ye love to go trim,
 Brought up of poor estate,
 With pride inordinate,
 Suddenly upstart
 From the dung-cart,
 The mattock and the shule,¹
 To reign and to rule;
 And have no grace to think
 How ye were wont to drink
 Of a leather bottle
 With a knavish stopple,
 When mannocks² was your meat,
 With mouldy bread to eat;
 Ye could none other get
 To chew and to gnaw,
 To fill therewith your maw;
 Lodging in fair straw,
 Couching your drowsy heads
 Sometime in lousy beds.
 Alas, this is out of mind!
 Ye grow now out of kind:³
 Many one ye have untwined,⁴
 And make the commons blind.
 But *qui se existimat stare,*⁵
 Let him well beware
 Lest that his foot slip,
 And have such a trip,
 And fall in such decay,
 That all the world may say,
 "Come down, in the Devil way!"

Yet, over⁶ all that,
 Of bishops they chat,

¹shovel.

²leavings.

³unnatural.

⁴destroyed.

⁵"who thinketh he standeth . . ." *et seq.* (1 Cor. x. 12).

⁶besides.

That though ye round your hair
 An inch above your ear,
 And have *aures patentes*¹
 And *parum intendentes*,²
 And your tonsures be croppéd,
 Your ears they be stoppéd!
 For master *Adulator*,³
 And doctor *Assentator*,⁴
 And *Blandior blandiris*,⁵
 With *Mentior mentiris*,⁶
 They follow your desirés,
 And so they blear your eye,
 That ye cannot espy
 How the male doth wry.⁷

Alas, for God's will,
 Why sit ye, prelates, still
 And suffer all this ill?
 Ye bishops of estates⁸
 Should open the broad gates
 Of your spiritual charge,
 And come forth at large,
 Like lanterns of light,
 In the people's sight,
 In pulpits authentic,
 For the weal public
 Of priesthood in this case;
 And always to chase
 Such manner of schismatics
 And half heretics,
 That would intoxicate,
 That would coinquinate,
 That would contaminate,
 And that would violate,

¹open ears.²too little hearing.³Sycophant.⁴Assenter.⁵I flatter, you flatter.⁶I lie, you lie.⁷How everything goes awry.⁸of high rank.

And that would derogate,
 And that would abrogate
 The Church's high estates,¹
 After this manner rates, —
 The which should be
 Both frank and free,
 And have their libertie,
 As of antiquitie
 It was ratified,
 And also gratified,
 By holy synodals
 And bulls papals,
 As it is *res certa*
 Contained in *Magna Charta*.

But master Damyan,²
 Or some other man,
 That clerkly is and can
 Well scripture expound
 And his texts ground,
 His benefice worth ten pound,
 Or scant worth twenty mark,
 And yet a noble clerk,
 He must do this wark;
 As I know a part,
 Some masters of art,
 Some doctors of law,
 Some learned in other saw,
 As in divinitie,
 That hath no dignitie
 But the poor degree
 Of the universiti;

Or else friar Frederick,
 Or else friar Dominick,
 Or friar Hugulinus,

¹dignitaries.

²The name of the squire in Chaucer's Merchant's Tale.

Or friar Augustinus,
 Or friar Carmelus,
 That ghostly¹ can heal us;
 Or else if we may
 Get a friar gray,
 Or else of the order
 Upon Greenwich border,
 Called Observance,
 Or a friar of France;
 Or else the poor Scot,
 It must come to his lot
 To shoot forth his shot;
 Or of Babwell beside Bury,
 To postel² upon a *Kyrie*,
 That would it should be noted
 How scripture should be quoted,
 And so clerky promoted;
 And yet the friar doted.

But men say your authoritie,
 And your noble see,
 And your dignitie,
 Should be imprinted better
 Than all the friars' letter;
 For if ye would take pain
 To preach a word or twain,
 Though it were never so plain,
 With clauses two or three,
 So as they might be
 Compendiously conveyed,
 These words should be more weighed,
 And better perceived,
 And thankfullerly received,
 And better should remain
 Among the people plain,
 That would your words retain

¹spiritually.²annotate.

And rehearse them again,
 Than a thousand thousand other
 That babber, bark, and bloter,
 And make a Welshman's hose¹
 Of the text and of the close.²

For protestation made,
 That I will not wade
 Farther in this brook,
 Nor farther for to look
 In devising of this book,
 But answer that I may
 For myself alway,
 Either *analogice*³
 Or else *categorice*,⁴
 So that in divinity
 Doctors that learnéd be,
 Nor bachelors of that faculty
 That hath taken degree
 In the university,
 Shall not be object at by me.

But doctor Bullatus,⁵
Parum litteratus,⁶
Dominus doctoratus
 At the Broadgatus,⁷
 Doctor Dawpatus,
 And bachelor *bacheloratus*,
 Drunken as a mouse,
 At the ale house,
 Taketh his pillion⁸ and his cap
 At the good ale tap,
 For lack of good wine;

¹i.e. turn it anyway to suit their purpose.

²glossary.

³analogically.

⁴categorically.

⁵Puffed-up.

⁶Too little learned.

⁷Broadgates Hall, Oxford, now Pembroke College.

⁸skull-cap.

As wise as Robin swine,
 Under a notary's sign
 Was made a divine;
 As wise as Waltham's calf,¹
 Must preach, a God's half,
 In the pulpit solemnly —
 More meet in the pillory!
 For, by saint Hillary,
 He can nothing smatter
 Of logic nor school matter,
 Neither *syllogisare*,²
 Nor *enthymemare*,³
 Nor knoweth his elenchs,⁴
 Nor his predicaments⁵;
 And yet he will mell
 To amend the Gospél,
 And will preach and tell
 What they do in hell;
 And he dare not well neven⁶
 What they do in heaven,
 Nor how far Temple Bar is
 From the Seven Starrès.

Now will I go
 And tell of other mo,
Semper protestando
De non impugnando,⁷
 The four orders of friars,
 Though some of them be liars;
 As Limiters⁸ at large
 Will charge and discharge;

¹Waltham's calf ran nine miles to suck a bull.

²syllogise.

³construct an enthymeme.

⁴elenchus - in logic.

⁵In logic.

⁶name.

⁷Always protesting
 About not attacking.

⁸Friars licensed to beg within certain districts.

As many a friar, God wote,
 Preaches for his groat,
 Flattering for a new coat
 And for to have his fees;
 Some to gather cheese;
 Loth they are to lese¹
 Either corn or malt;
 Sometime meal and salt,
 Sometime a bacon flick,²
 That is three fingers thick
 Of lard and of grease,
 Their convent to increase.

I put you out of doubt,
 This can not be brought about
 But they their tongues file,
 And make a pleasant style
 To Margery and to Maud,
 How they have no fraud;
 And sometime they provoke
 Both Jill and Jack at Noke
 Their duties to withdraw,
 That they ought by the law
 Their curates to content
 In open time³ and Lent.
 God wot, they take great pain
 To flatter and to feign;
 But it is an old-said saw,
 That need hath no law.
 Some walk about in melotes,⁴
 In gray russet and hairy coats;
 Some will neither gold nor groats;
 Some pluck a partridge in remotest,⁵

¹lose.²flich.³When no fasts were imposed.⁴skin or hair garments, reaching from neck to loins, worn by monks during manual labour.⁵remote places.

And by the bars of her tail
 Will know a raven from a rail,
 A quail, the rail, and the old raven!
*Sed libera nos a malo!*¹ Amen.
 And by *Dudum*, their Clementine,²
 Against curates they repine;
 And say properly they are *sacerdotes*,³
 To shrive, assoyle,⁴ and release
 Dame Margery's soul out of hell.
 But when the friar fell in the well,
 He could not sing himself thereout
 But by the help of Christian Clout.⁵
 Another Clementine also,
 How friar Fabian, with other mo,
Exivit de Paradiso;
 When they again thither shall come,
De hoc petimus consilium:
 And through all the world they go
 With *Dirige* and *Placebo*.⁶

But now my mind ye understand,
 For they must take in hand
 To preach, and to withstand
 All manner of objections;
 For bishops have protections,
 They say, to do corrections,
 But they have no affections
 To take the said directions.
 In such manner of cases,
 Men say, they bear no faces

¹But deliver us from evil!

²A bull of Clement V beginning with the word *Dudum* (see *Clement*, lib. III., tit. vii., cap. 2).

³priests. ⁴confess, absolve.

⁵Or Christine Clout, feminine of Colin Clout. Refers to the ballad *The Friar Well-fitted* (see *Ballads*, British Museum, 643 m).

⁶Dyce notes: "Considerable mutilation of the text may be suspected here."

To occupy such places,
 To sow the seed of graces:
 Their hearts are so fainted,
 And they be so attainted
 With covetous¹ and ambition,
 And other superstition,
 That they be deaf and dumb,
 And play silence and glum,
 Can say nothing but "Mum!"

They occupy them so
 With singing *Placebo*,
 They will no farther go:
 They had liefer² to please,
 And take their worldly ease,
 Than to take on hand
 Worshipfully to withstand
 Such temporal war and bate³
 As now is made of late
 Against Holy Church estate,
 Or to maintain good quarrels.
 The lay men call them barrels
 Full of gluttony
 And of hypocrisy,
 That counterfeits and paints⁴
 As they were very saints.
 In matters that them like
 They shew them politic,
 Pretending gravity
 And signiority,
 With all solemnity,
 For their indemnity!
 For they will have no loss
 Of a penny nor of a cross⁵
 Of their predial lands,

¹covetousness.

²rather.

³debate.

⁴feigns.

⁵Coins so marked.

That cometh to their hands:
 And as far as they dare set,
 All is fish that cometh to net.
 Building royally¹
 Their mansions curiously,
 With turrets and with towers,
 With halls and with bowers,
 Stretching to the stars,
 With glass windows and bars;
 Hanging about the walls
 Cloths of gold and palls,²
 Arras of rich array,
 Fresh as flowers in May;
 With dame Diana naked;
 How lusty Venus quakéd,
 And how Cupid shakéd
 His dart, and bent his bow
 For to shoot a crow³
 At her tirly tirlow;
 And how Paris of Troy
 Danced a lege de moy,
 Made lusty sport and joy
 With dame Helen the queen;
 With such stories bydene⁴
 Their chambers well besene⁵;
 With triumphs of Cæsar,
 And of Pompeius' war,
 Of renown and of fame,
 By them to get a name.⁶
 Now all the world stares,
 How they ride in goodly chairs,
 Conveyed by elephants,
 With laureate garlands,

¹Refers especially to Wolsey's building of Hampton Court.

²fine stuffs. ³an arrow. ⁴together. ⁵adorned.

⁶This, and the following, is a description of a definite set of tapestries at Hampton Court known as "Petrarch's Triumphs."

And by unicorns
 With their seemly horns;
 Upon these beasts riding,
 Naked boys striding,
 With wanton wenches winking.
 Now truly, to my thinking,
 That is a speculation
 And a meet meditation
 For prelates of estate,¹
 Their corage² to abate
 From worldly wantonness,
 Their chambers thus to dress
 With such perfectness
 And all such holiness!
 Howbeit they let down fall
 Their churches cathedral.

Squire, knight, and lord,
 Thus the Church remord³;
 With all temporal people
 They run against the steeple,
 Thus talking and telling
 How some of you are melling⁴;
 Yet soft and fair for swelling –
 Beware of a quean's yelling.⁵
 It is a busy thing
 For one man to rule a king
 Alone and make reckoning,
 To govern over all
 And rule a realm royal
 By one man's very wit.
 Fortune may chance to fit,
 And when he weeneth⁶ to sit,
 Yet may he miss the cushion:
 For I rede⁷ a preposition –

¹of high rank.²affection.³blame.⁴meddling.⁵i.e. a woman's chatter.⁶thinketh.⁷tell.

*Cum regibus amicare,
Et omnibus dominari,
Et supra te pravare.¹*
 Wherefore he hath good ure²
 That can himself assure
 How fortune will endure.
 Then let reason you support,
 For the commonalty doth report
 That they have great wonder
 That ye keep them so under;
 Yet they marvel so much less,
 For ye play so at the chess,
 As they suppose and guess,
 That some of you but late
 Hath played so check-mate
 With lords of great estate,
 After such a rate,
 That they shall mell nor make,
 Nor upon them take,
 For king's nor kayser's sake,
 But at the pleasure of one
 That ruleth the roost alone.

Helas, I say, helas!
 How may this come to pass,
 That a man shall hear a mass,
 And not so hardy on his head³
 To look on God in form of bread,
 But that the parish clerk
 Thereupon must heark,
 And grant him at his asking
 For to see the sacring⁴?

¹To be friendly with kings,
 And all things to rule,
 And to overleap thyself.

²hap, fortune. ³i.e. not be so bold, upon pain of his head.

⁴sacrament.

And how may this accord,
 No man to our sovereign lord
 So hardy to make suit,
 Nor yet to execute
 His commandment,
 Without the assent
 Of our president,
 Nor to express to his person,
 Without your consentation
 Grant him his licence
 To press to his presence,
 Nor to speak to him secretly,
 Openly nor privily,
 Without this president be by,
 Or else his substitute
 Whom he will depute?
 Neither earl ne duke
 Permitted? By saint Luke,
 And by sweet saint Mark,
 This is a wondrous wark!
 That the people talké this,¹
 Somewhat there is amiss:
 The Devil cannot stop their mouths,
 But they will talk of such uncouths,²
 All that ever they ken
 Against all spiritual men!

Whether it be wrong or right,
 Or else for despight,
 Or however it hap,
 Their tongues thus do clap,
 And through such detraction
 They put you to your action;
 And whether they say truly
 As they may abide thereby,
 Or else that they do lie,
 Ye know better than I!

¹thus.²strange matters.

But now *debetis scire*,
 And groundly *audire*,
 In your *convenire*,
 Of this *praemunire*,
 Or else in the miré
 They say they will you cast:
 Therefore stand sure and fast!

Stand sure, and take good footing,
 And let be all your mooting,
 Your gasping and your tooting,¹
 And your partial promoting
 Of those that stand in your grace.
 But old servants ye chase,
 And put them out of their place.²
 Make ye no murmuration,
 Though I write after this fashion;
 Though I, Colin Clout,
 Among the whole rout³
 Of you that clerks be,
 Take now upon me
 Thus copiously to write,
 I do it for no despite.
 Wherefore take no disdain
 At my style rude and plain;
 For I rebuke no man
 That virtuous is: why then
 Wreak ye your anger on me?
 For those that virtuous be
 Have no cause to say
 That I speak out of the way!

Of no good bishop speak I,
 Nor good priest I ascry,⁴

¹spying.

²Perhaps a reference to Skelton himself, who was an old Court official.

³crowd.

⁴attack.

Good friar, nor good chanon,
 Good nun, nor good canon,
 Good monk, nor good clerk,
 Nor yet of no good wark:
 But my recounting is
 Of them that do amiss,
 In speaking and rebelling,
 In hindering and disavailing¹
 Holy Church, our mother,
 One against another.
 To use such despiting
 Is all my whole writing;
 To hinder no man,
 As near as I can,
 For no man have I named:
 Wherefore should I be blamed?
 Ye ought to be ashamed,
 Against me to be gramed,²
 And can tell no cause why,
 But that I write truly!

Then if any there be
 Of high or low degree
 Of the spiritualitie,
 Or of the temporalitie,
 That doth think or ween
 That his conscience be not clean,
 And feeleth himself sick,
 Or touched on the quick,
 Such grace God them send
 Themselves to amend,—
 For I will not pretend
 Any man to offend!

Wherefore, as thinketh me,
 Great idiots they be,

*acting to the detriment of.

²angered.

And little grace they have,
 This treatise to deprave;
 Nor will hear no preaching,
 Nor no virtuous teaching,
 Nor will have no resting
 Of any virtuous writing;
 Will know none intelligence
 To reform their negligence,
 But live still out of fashion,
 To their own damnation!
 To do shame they have no shame,
 But they would no man should them blame!
 They have an evil name,
 But yet they will occupy the same!

With them the word of God
 Is counted for no rod;
 They count it for a railing,
 That nothing is availing.
 The preachers with evil hailing:
 "Shall they daunt us prelates,
 That be their primates?
 Not so hardy on their pates!
 Hark, how the losel¹ prates,
 With a wide wesaunt²!
 Avaunt, sir Guy of Gaunt!
 Avaunt, lewd priest, avaunt!
 Avaunt, sir doctor Devias!
 Prate of thy matins and thy mass,
 And let our matters pass!
 How darest thou, dawcock, mell?
 How darest thou, losel,
 Allegate³ the Gospel
 Against us of the council?
 Avaunt to the Devil of hell!
 Take him, Warden of the Fleet,⁴

¹knaves.²gullet.³Allege.⁴i.e. Fleet Prison.

Set him fast by the feet!
 I say, Lieutenant of the Tower,
 Make this lurdain¹ for to lour;
 Lodge him in Little Ease,²
 Feed him with beans and peas!
 The King's Bench or Marshalsea,
 Have him thither by and by !
 The villain preacheth openly,
 And declareth our villany;
 And of our free simpleness,
 He says that we are reckless,
 And full of wilfulness,
 Shameless and merciless,
 Incorrigible and insatiate;
 And after this rate
 Against us doth prate!

“At Paul's Cross or elsewhere,
 Openly at Westminstere,
 And Saint Mary Spittle,
 They set not by us a whistle!
 At the Austin Friars
 They count us for liars!
 And at Saint Thomas of Akers
 They clack of us like crakers,
 How we will rule all at will
 Without good reason or skill;
 And say how that we be
 Full of partialitie;
 And how at a prong
 We turn right into wrong,
 Delay causes so long
 That right no man can fong³;
 They say many matters be born

¹clown.

²Concerning this famous cell, see Ainsworth's *Tower of London*.

³find.

By the right of a ram's horn¹!
 Is not this a shameful scorn,
 To be teared thus and torn?

"How may we this endure?
 Wherefore we make you sure,
 Ye preachers shall be yawed²;
 And some shall be sawed,
 As noble Isaias,
 The holy prophet, was;
 And some of you shall die,
 Like holy Jeremy;
 Some hanged, some slain,
 Some beaten to the brain;
 And we will rule and reign,
 And our matters maintain,
 Who dare³ say there again,⁴
 Or who dare disdain,
 At our pleasure and will!
 For, be it good or be it ill,
 As it is, it shall be still,—
 For all master doctor of Civil,
 Or of Dominic, or doctor Drivel,
 Let him cough, rough,⁵ or snivel!
 Run God, run Devil,
 Run who may run best,
 And let take all the rest!
 We set not a nutshell
 The way to heaven or hell!"

Lo, this is the guise nowadays!
 It is to dread, men says,
 Lest they be Sadducees,
 As they be said sain,⁶

¹By justice as crooked as a ram's horns.

²cut down.

³Whoever dare. (So also in next line.)

⁴against.

⁵belch.

⁶reported.

Which determined plain
 We should not rise again
 At dreadful doomsday.
 And so it seemeth they play,
 Which hate to be corrected
 When they be infected,
 Nor will suffer this book
 By hook ne by crook
 Printed for to be,
 For that no man should see
 Nor read in any scrolls
 Of their drunken nolls,
 Nor of their noddy pollis,
 Nor of their silly souls,
 Nor of some witless pates
 Of divers great estates,¹
 As well as other men.

Now to withdraw my pen,
 And now a while to rest,
 Meseemeth it for the best.

The forecastle of my ship
 Shall glide, and smoothly slip
 Out of the waves wood²
 Of the stormy flood;
 Shoot anchor, and lie at road,³
 And sail not far abroad,
 Till the coast be clear,
 And the lode-star appear.
 My ship now will I steer
 Toward the port salu⁴
 Of our Saviour Jesu,⁵
 Such grace that he us send,
 To rectify and amend

¹persons of high rank. ²wild. ³in harbour. ⁴safe port.

⁵May refer to his intention to go into sanctuary in 1523.

Things that are amiss,
When that his pleasure is.
Amen!

In opere imperfecto,
In opere semper perfecto,
*Et in opere plusquam perfecto!*¹

*Colinus Cloutus, quanquam mea carmina multis
Sordescunt stultis, sed puevinate sunt rare cultis,
Pue vinatis altisem divino flamine flatis.
Unde mea refert tanto minus, invida quamvis
Lingua nocere parat, quia, quanquam rustica canto,
Undique cantabor tamen et celebrabor ubique,
Inclita dum maneat gens Anglica. Laurus honoris,
Quondam regnorum regina et gloria regum,
Heu, modo marcescit, tabescit, languida torpet!
Ah pudet, ah miseret! vetor hic ego pandere plura
Pro gemitu et lacrimis: praestet peto praemia paena.*²

¹In an imperfect work,
In a work always perfect,
And in a work more than perfect.

²[First three lines unintelligible.] Whence it concerns me so much the less, although the envious tongue prepares to hurt, because, although I sing of rustic things, yet I shall be sung about on all sides, and everywhere shall be celebrated, so long as the glorious English race remains. The laurel of honour, once the queen of possessions and the glory of kings, alas! now decays and rots and grows languid and torpid! Ah, the shame! ah, the pity! Here I am forbidden, for groaning and tears, to speak more. I pray the rewards may exceed the punishment.

How the Doughty

DUKE OF ALBANY,¹

*Like a Coward Knight, Ran Away Shamefully With an
Hundred Thousand Tratling Scots and Faint-Hearted
Frenchmen, Beside the Water of the Tweed.*

Rejoice, England,
And understand
These tidings new,
Which be as true
As the gospel:
This duke so fell
Of Albany,
So cowardly,
With all his host
Of the Scottish coast,
For all their boast,
Fled like a beast;
Wherefore to jest
Is my delight
Of this coward knight,
And for to write
In the despight
Of the Scots rank
Of Huntley-bank,²
Of Lowdian,³
Of Locrian,⁴
And the ragged ray
Of Galloway.

¹Regent of Scotland during James V's minority. This poem refers to his invasion of the borders in 1523.

²Skeltoff often uses Scottish words throughout the poem quite at random, as "local colour."

³Lothian.

⁴Loch Ryan.

Dunbar, Dundee,
Ye shall trow me,
False Scots are ye:
Your hearts sore fainted,
And so attainted,
Like cowards stark,
At the Castle of Wark,
By the Water of Tweed,
Ye had evil speed;
Like cankered curs
Ye lost your spurs,
For in that fray
Ye ran away,
With, hey, dog, hey!

For Sir William Lyle
Within short while,
That valiant knight,
Put you to flight;
By his valiance
Two thousand of France
There he put back,
To your great lack,¹
And utter shame
Of your Scottish name.
Your chief chieftain,
Void of all brain,
Duke of all Albany,
Then shamefully
He recoiléd back,
To his great lack,
When he heard tell
That my Lord Admiral²
Was coming down

¹reproach.

²i.e. Surrey.

To make him frown
And to make him lour,
With the noble power
Of my lord cardinal,
As an hoste royal,
After the ancient manner,
With Saint Cuthbert's banner,
And Saint William's also;
Your captain ran to go,
To go, to go, to go,
And brake up all his host;
For all his crake and boast,
Like a coward knight
He fled and durst not fight,
He ran away by night.

But now must I
Your Duke ascry
Of Albany
With a word or twain
In sentence plain.

Ye duke so doughty,
So stern, so stouty,
In short sentence
Of your pretence
What is the ground
Briefly and round
To me expound,
Or else will I
Evidently
Shew as it is:
For the cause is this,
How ye pretend
For to defend
The young Scottish king,
But ye mean a thing,
An ye could bring
The matter about,

To put his eyes out
 And put him down,
 And set his crown
 On your own head
 When he were dead.
 Such treachery
 And traitory
 Is all your cast;
 Thus ye have compassed
 With the French king
 A false reckoning
 To invade England,
 As I understand:
 But our king royall,
 Whose name over all,
 Noble Henry the Eight,
 Shall cast a bait,
 And set such a snare
 That shall cast you in care,
 Both King Francis and thee,
 That knownen ye shall be
 For the most recreyd¹
 Cowards afraid,
 And falsest forsworn,
 That ever were born.

O ye wretched Scots,
 Ye puant² pisspots,
 It shall be your lots
 To be knit up with knots
 Of halters and ropes
 About your traitors' throats!
 O Scots perjuréd,
 Unhappy vred,³
 Ye may be assuréd
 Your falsehood discuréd⁴

¹recreant.²stinking.³unfortunate.⁴discovered.

It is and shall be
 From the Scottish sea
 Unto Gabione!
 For ye be false each one,
 False and false again,
 Never true nor plain,
 But fleer, flatter, and feign,
 And ever to remain
 In wretched beggary
 And mangy misery,
 In lowsy loathsomeness
 And scabbéd surfiness,
 And in abomination
 Of all manner of nation,—
 Nation most in hate,
 Proud and poor of state!
 Twit, Scot, go keep thy den,
 Mell¹ not with Englishmen;
 Thou did nothing but bark
 At the Castle of Wark.
 Twit, Scot, yet again once
 We shall break thy bones,
 And hang you upon poles,
 And burn you all to coals;
 With, twit Scot, twit Scot, twit!
 Walk, Scot, go beg a bit
 Of bread at each man's heck²!
 The fiend, Scot, break thy neck!
 Twit, Scot, again I say,
 Twit, Scot of Galloway,
 Twit, Scot, shake thee dog, hey!
 Twit, Scot, thou ran away!

We set not a fly
 By your Duke of Albany;
 • We set not a prane³

¹meddle.

²hatch, door.

³prawn.

By such a drunken drane¹;
 We set not a mite
 By such a coward knight,
 Such a proud palliard,²
 Such a skirgalliard,³
 Such a stark coward,
 Such a proud poltrown,
 Such a foul coistrown,⁴
 Such a doughty dagswain⁵!
 Send him to France again,
 To bring with him more brain
 From King Francis of France:
 God send them both mischance!

Ye Scots all the rabble,
 Ye shall never be able
 With us for to compare;
 What though ye stamp and stare?
 God send you sorrow and care!
 With us whenever ye mell,
 Yet we bear away the bell,
 When ye cankered knaves
 Must creep into your caves
 Your heads for to hide,
 For ye dare not abide.

Sir Duke of Albany,
 Right inconveniently,⁶
 Ye rage and ye rave,
 And your worship deprave:
 Not like Duke Hamilcar,
 With the Romans that made war,
 Nor like his son Hanibal,
 Nor like Duke Hastrubal
 Of Carthage in Afric;

¹drone. ²rascal. ³runaway. ⁴scullion.

⁵literally, a rough coverlet. ⁶unbecomingly.

Yet somewhat ye be like
In some of their conditions,
And their false seditions,
And their dealing double,
And their wayward trouble:
But yet they were bold,
And manly manifold,
Their enemies to assail
In plain field and battail;
But ye and your host,
Full of brag and boast,
And full of waste wind,
How ye will bears bind,
And the devil down ding,¹
Yet ye dare do nothing
But leap away like frogs,
And hide you under logs,
Like pigs and like hogs,
And like mangy dogs!
What an army were ye?
Or what activity
Is in you, beggers, brawls,
Full of scabs and scawls,
Of vermine and of lice,
And of all manner vice!

Sir Duke, nay, Sir Duck,
Sir Drake of the Lake, Sir Duck
Of the Dunghill, for small luck
Ye have in feats of war;
Ye make nought but ye mar;
Ye are a false intruder,
And a false abuser,
And an untrue knight;
Thou hast too little might
Against England to fight.

¹knock down.

Thou art a graceless wight
 To put thyself to flight:
 A vengeance and despight
 On thee must needs alight,
 That durst not bide the sight
 Of my Lord Admiral,
 Of chivalry the well,
 Of knighthood the flower
 In every martial shower,¹
 The noble Earl of Surrey,
 That put thee in such fray;
 Thou durst no field derain,²
 Nor no battle maintain
 Against our strong captain,
 But thou ran home again
 For fear thou should be slain,
 Like a Scottish ketering³
 That durst abide no reckoning;
 Thy heart would not serve thee:
 The fiend of hell might sterve⁴ thee!

No man hath heard
 Of such a coward,
 And such a mad image
 Carried in a cage,
 As it were a cottage!
 Or of such a mawment⁵
 Carried in a tent.
 In a tent! nay, nay,
 But in a mountain gay,
 Like a great hill
 For a windmill,
 Therein to couch still,
 That no man him kill;
 As it were a goat
 In a sheep-cote,

¹storm, assault. ²contest. ³border-raider. ⁴damn.

⁵puppet.

About him a park
 Of a mad wark,
 Men call it a toyl.¹
 Therein, like a royl,²
 Sir Duncan, ye dared,³
 And thus ye prepared
 Your carcass to keep
 Like a silly sheep,
 A sheep of Cotswold,
 From rain and from cold,
 And from raining of raps,
 And such after claps:
 Thus in your cowardly castell
 Ye dect you to dwell!
 Such a captain of horse,
 It made no great force⁴
 If that ye had ta'en
 Your last deadly bane
 With a gun-stone,⁵
 To make you to groan.
 But hide thee, Sir Topas,
 Now into the Castle of Bass,
 And lurk there, like an ass,
 With some Scottish lass
 With dugs, dugs, dugs!
 I shrew thy Scottish lugs,⁶
 Thy munypins, and thy crag,⁷
 For thou cannot but brag
 Like a Scottish hag.
 Adieu now, Sir Wrig-Wrag,
 Adieu, Sir Dalyrag!
 Thy melling is but mocking;
 Thou may'st give up thy cocking,
 Give it up, and cry creke,
 Like an hoddipeke!⁸

¹snare.²wench.³lurked [terrified].⁴did not greatly matter.⁵cannon-ball.⁶ears.⁷mouth-pins [teeth] . . . throat.⁸fool.

Whereto should I more speak
 Of such a farly freke,¹
 Of such an horn keke,
 Of such a bold captain
 That dare not turn again,
 Nor durst not crack a word,
 Nor durst not draw his sword
 Against the Lion White,²
 But ran away quite?
 He ran away by night,
 In the owl flight,
 Like a coward knight.
 Adieu, coward, adew,
 False knight, and most untrue!
 I render thee, false rebell,
 To the flinging fiend of hell.

Hark yet, Sir Duke, a word,
 In earnest or in bawd:
 What, have ye, villain, forged,
 And virulently disgorged,
 As though ye would parbrake,³
 Your avaunts to make,
 With words enbosed,⁴
 Ungratiuously engrosed,
 How ye will undertake
 Our royal king to make
 His own realm to forsake?
 Such lewd language ye spake.
 Sir Duncan, in the devil way,
 Be well ware what ye say:
 Ye say that he and ye,—
 Which he and ye? let see:
 Ye mean Francis, French king,
 Should bring about this thing.
 I say, thou lewd lurdain,⁵

¹strange fellow.

²Surrey's badge.

³vomit.

⁴swollen words.

⁵vile clown.

That neither of you twain
 So hardy nor so bold
 His countenance to behold!
 If our most royal Harry
 List with you to varry¹
 Full soon ye should miscarry,
 For ye durst not tarry
 With him to strive a stound²;
 If he on you but frown'd,
 Not for a thousand pound,
 Ye durst bide on the ground,
 Ye would run away round,
 And cowardly turn your backs,
 For all your comely cracks,³
 And, for fear par case
 To look him in the face
 Ye would defile the place,
 And run your way apace.
 Though I trim you this trace
 With English somewhat base,
Yet, save voster grace,
 Thereby I shall purchace
 No unpleasant reward,
 If ye well can regard
 Your cankered cowardness
 And your shameful doubleness.

Are ye not frantic mad,
 And wretchedly bestad,
 To rail against his grace
 That shall bring you full base,
 And set you in such case
 That between you twain
 There shall be drawen a train
 That shall be to your pain?
 To fly ye shall be fain,
 And never turn again.

¹contend.²moment.³boasts.

What, would Francis, our friar,
 Be such a false liar,
 So mad a cordelier,¹
 So mad a murmurer?
 Ye muse somewhat too far,
 All out of joint ye jar:
 God let you never thrive!
 Ween ye, dawcocks, to drive
 Our king out of his ream?
 Ge heme, rank Scot, ge heme,
 With fond Francis, French king:
 Our master shall you bring,
 I trust, to low estate,
 And mate you with check-mate!

Your brains are idle;
 It is time for you to bridle,
 And pipe in a quibble²;
 For it is impossible
 For you to bring about
 Our king for to drive out
 Of this his realm royal
 And land imperial;
 So noble a prince as he
 In all activitie
 Of hardy martial actes,
 Fortunate in all his feates.

And now I will me 'dress
 His valiance to express,
 Though insufficient am I
 His grace to magnify
 And laud equivalently.
 Howbeit, loyally,
 After mine allegiance,
 My pen I will advance
 To extol his noble grace,

¹Franciscan friar.

²a silly song (?).

Inspite of thy coward's face,
 Inspite of King Francis,
 Devoid of all noblesse,
 Devoid of good corage,¹
 Devoid of wisdom sage,
 Mad, frantic, and savage;
 Thus he doth disparage
 His blood with fond dotage.
 A prince to play the page
 It is reckless rage,
 And a lunatic over-rage.
 What though my style be rude?
 With truth it is enewed²:
 Truth ought to be rescued,
 Truth should not be subdued.

But now will I expound
 What nobleness doth abound,
 And what honour is found,
 And what virtues be resident
 In our royal regent,
 Our peerless president,
 Our king most excellent.

In martial prowess
 Like unto Hercules;
 In prudence and wisdom
 Like unto Solomon;
 In his goodly person
 Like unto Absolon;
 In loyalty and foy³
 Like to Hector of Troy;
 And his glory to increase,
 Like to Scipiades⁴;
 In royal majesty

¹inclination. ²brightened. ³faith. ⁴Scipio.

Like unto Ptolemy,
Like to Duke Josue,
And the valiant Machube;
That if I would report
All the royal sort
Of his nobility,
His magnanimity,
His animosity,¹
His frugality,
His liberality,
His affability,
His humanity,
His stability,
His humility,
His benignity,
His royal dignity,
My learning is too small
For to recount them all.

What losells² then are ye,
Like cowards as ye be,
To rail on his estate,
With words inordinate!

He rules his commalty
With all benignity;
His noble baronage,
He putteth them in corage
To exploit deeds of arms,
To do damage and harms
Of such as be his foes.
Wherever he rides or goes
His subjects he doth support,
Maintain them with comfort
Of his most princely port,
As all men can report.

¹bravery.

²knaves.

Then ye be a snappish sort,
Et faitez à luy grand tort,
 With your emboséd¹ jaws
 To rail on him like daws:
 The fiend scratch out your maws!

All his subjects and he
 Most lovingly agree
 With whole heart and true mind,
 They find his grace so kind;
 Wherewith he doth them bind
 At all hours to be ready
 With him to live and die,
 And to spend their hearts'-blood,
 Their bodies and their good,
 With him in all distress,
 Alway in readiness
 To assist his noble grace;
 Inspite of thy coward's face,
 Most false attainted traitor,
 And false forsworn faitor.²

Avaunt, coward recrayed!³
 Thy pride shall be allayed;
 With Sir Francis of France
 We shall pipe you a dance,
 Shall turn you to mischance!

I rede⁴ you, look about;
 For ye shall be driven out
 Of your land in short space:
 We will so follow in the chase
 That ye shall have no grace
 For to turn your face;
 And thus, Saint George to borrow,⁵
 Ye shall have shame and sorrow.

¹frothing. ²dissembler. ³recreant. ⁴advise.

⁵St. George being my pledge.

LENVOY

Go, little quaire, quickly;
Shew them that shall you read
How that ye are likely
Over all the world to spread.
The false Scots for dread,
With the Duke of Albany,
Beside the Water of Tweed
They fled full cowardly.
Though your English be rude,
Barren of eloquence,
Yet, briefly to conclude,
Grounded is your sentence
On truth, under defence
Of all true Englishmen,
This matter to credence
That I write with my pen.

SKELTON LAUREATE, *Obsequious et Loyal.*

Hereafter followeth a little Book which hath to name

WHY COME YE NOT TO COURT?

Compiled by MAISTER SKELTON, Poet Laureate

*The reluctant mirror for all Prelates and Presidents, as well
spiritual as temporal, sadly to look upon,
devised in English*

All noblemen of this take heed,
And believe it as your Creed.

Too hasty of sentence,
Too fierce for none offence,
Too scarce of your expence,
Too large in negligence,
Too slack in recompence,
Too haut in excellence,
Too light in intelligence,
And too light in credence:
Where these keep residence
Reason is banished thence,
And also Dame Prudence,
With sober Sapience.

All noblemen of this take heed,
And believe it as your Creed.

Then, without collusion,
Mark well this conclusion,
Through such abusion,
And by such illusion,
Unto great confusion
A nobleman may fall,
And his honour appall;
And if ye think this shall

Not rub you on the gall
Then the devil take all!

All noblemen of this take heed,
And believe it as your Creed.

*Haec vates ille,
De quo loquantur mille.*¹

WHY COME YE NOT To COURT?

For age is a page
For the court full unmeet,
For age cannot rage,²
Nor bass³ her sweet sweet.

But when age seeth that rage
Doth assuage and refrain,
Then will age have a corage⁴
To come to court again.

But
Helas, sage over-age
So madly decays
That age for dotage
Is reckoned nowadays.

Thus age (*a grand dommage*)
Is nothing set by,
And rage in over-age
Doth run lamentably.

So
That rage must make pillage
To catch that catch may,
And with such forage
Hunt the boskage,⁵
That harts will run away!
Both harts and hinds

¹That poet of whom a thousand speak.

²kiss.

³inclination.

⁴toy wantonly.

⁵woods.

With all good minds:
Farewell, then, have good-day!

Then, have good-day, adew!
For default of rescue
Some men may haply rue,
And some their heads mew;
The time doth fast ensue
That bales¹ begin to brew.
I drede, by sweet Jesu,
This tale will be too true —
“In faith, deacon, thou crew,
In faith, deacon, thou crew!”

“Deacon, thou crew!” doubtless!
For, truly to express,
There hath been much excess,
With banqueting brainless,
With rioting reckless,
With gambolling thriftless,
With spend and waste witless,
Treating of truce restless,
Prating of peace peaceless.
The countering at Calais²
Wrung us on the males³:
Chief Counsellor was careless,
Groaning, grudging, graceless;
And, to none intent,
Our tallwood all is brent,⁴
Our faggots are all spent.
We may blow at the coal!
Our mare hath lost her foal,
And “Mock hath lost her shoe:

¹troubles.

²Probably refers to Wolsey's expedition to Calais, July–November, 1521, as mediator between Francis and Charles. It has been formerly supposed that this passage referred to the Field of the Cloth of Gold (1520). It may refer to both expeditions.

³purses. ⁴probably — Cost us something. ⁴fire-wood . . . burnt.

What may she do thereto?"
 An end of an old song.
 Do right and do no wrong!
 As right as a ram's horn!
 For thrift is thread-bare worn,
 Our sheep our shrewdly shorn,
 And truth is all to-torn;
 Wisdom is laughed to scorn,
 Favell¹ is false forsworn,
 Javell² is nobly born,
 Havell and Harvey Hafter,³
 Jack Travell and Cole Crafter –
 We shall hear more hereafter.
 With polling and shaving,
 With borrowing and craving,
 With reaving and raving,
 With swearing and staring,
 There 'vaileth no reasoning,
 For Will doth rule all thing,
 Will, Will, Will, Will, Will!
 He ruleth alway still.
 Good reason and good skill,
 They may be garlic pill,⁴
 Carry sacks to the mill,
 Or peascods they may shill,⁵
 Or else go roast a stone!
 There is no man but one⁶
 That hath the strokes alone:
 Be it black or white,
 All that he doth is right –
 As right as a camock crooked.⁷
 This bill well over-lookéd,
 Clearly preceive we may
 There went the hare away,
 The hare, the fox, the gray,⁸

¹Flattery. ²Low knave. ³See this character in *Bouge of Court*.
⁴peel. ⁵shell. ⁶i.e. Wolsey. ⁷a crooked branch. ⁸badger.

The hart, the hind, the buck¹:
 God send us better luck,
 God send us better luck!

Twit, Andrew, twit, Scot,
 Ge hame, ge scour the pot:
 For we have spent our shot.
 We shall have a *tot quot*²
 From the Pope of Rome,
 To weave all in one lome
 A web of linsey-woolsey,
Opus male dulce:
 The devil kiss his cule³!
 For, whiles he doth rule
 All is warse and warse,
 The devil kiss his arse!
 For whether he bless or curse
 It cannot be much worse.
 From Bamborough to Botham Bar
 We have cast up our war,
 And made worthy truce
 With "Gup, levell suse!"
 Our money madly lent,
 And more madly spent:
 From Croydon to Kent
 Wot ye whither they went?
 From Winchelsea to Rye,
 And all not worth a fly!
 From Wentbridge to Hull
 Our army waxeth dull,
 With "Turn all home again!"
 And never a Scot slain.
 Yet the good Earl of Surrey⁴

¹A reference, probably, to the Duke of Buckingham, who was believed to have been impeached and brought to the block by Wolsey in 1521.

²a dispensation.

³tail.

⁴Surrey's expedition, July, 1522.

The Frenchmen he doth fray,
 And vexeth them day by day
 With all the power he may;
 The Frenchmen he hath fainted,
 And made their hearts attainted:
 Of chivalry he is the floure,
 Our Lord be his succour!
 The Frenchmen he hath so mated¹
 And their courage abated
 That they are but half men:
 Like foxes in their den,
 Like cankered cowards all,
 Like urchins² in a stone wall,
 They keep them in their holds,
 Like hen-hearted cuckolds.

But yet they over-shoot us
 With crowns and with scutus³;
 With scutes and crowns of gold
 I drede we are bought and sold:
 It is a wondrous wark!
 They shoot all at one mark, —
 At the Cardinal's hat,
 They shoot all at that.
 Out of their strong towns
 They shoot at him with crowns:
 With crowns of gold emblazed
 They make him so amazed
 And his eyen so dazed
 That he ne see can
 To know God nor man!
 He is set so high
 In his hierarchy
 Of frantic frenozy
 And foolish fantasy,

¹confounded, check-mated. ²hedge-hogs.

³scut, coin worth about 3s.

That in the Chamber of Stars¹
 All matters there he mars:
 Clapping his rod on the board,
 No man dare speak a word,
 For he hath all the saying
 Without any renaying.²
 He rolleth in his records,
 He saith "How say ye, my lords?
 Is not my reason good?"
 (Good even, good Robin Hood!³)
 Some say "Yes!" and some
 Sit still as they were dumb!
 Thus thwarting over thum
 He ruleth all the roast
 With bragging and with boast.
 Borne up on every side
 With pomp and with pride,
 With "Trump up, Alleluia!"
 For Dame Philargeria⁴
 Hath so his heart in hold
 He loveth nothing but gold;
 And Asmodeus of hell
 Maketh his members swell
 With Dalida⁵ to mell,
 That wanton damosell.
 Adew, Philosophia!
 Adew, Theologia!
 Welcome, Dame Simonia,⁶
 With Dame Castrimargia,⁷
 To drink and for to eat
 Sweet hippocras and sweet meat!
 To keep his flesh chaste,
 In Lent, for a repaste
 He eateth capons stewéd,

¹Star-Chamber. ²contradicting.

³A proverbial expression for civility extorted by fear.

⁴Cupidity. ⁵Delilah. ⁶Simony. ⁷gluttony.

Pheasant and partridge mewéd,
 Hens, chickens, and pigs:
 He froynes and he frigs,
 Spareth neither maid nor wife:
 This is a 'postle's life!

Helas! my heart is sorry
 To tell of vain glory!
 But now upon this story
 I will no further rime
 Till another time,
 Till another time.

What newés, what newés?
 Small newés that true is,
 That be worth two cués.¹
 But at the naked stewés,²
 I understand how that
*The Sign of the Cardinal's Hat,*³
 That inn is now shut up,
 With "Gup, whore, gup, now, gup!
 Gup Guilliam Travillian!"
 With "Jaist you, I say, Julian!
 Will ye bear no coals?"⁴
 A meinys⁵ of mare-foals,
 That occupy⁶ their holes,
 Full of pocky moles.⁷

What hear ye of Lancashire?
 They were not paid their hire;
 They are fell as any fire.

What hear ye of Cheshire?
 They have laid all in the mire;

¹cue was half a farthing.

²i.e. brothels.

³A Southwark brothel mentioned in Stow's *Survey*.

⁴"Will ye not brook this insult? (being driven out).

⁵A set. ⁶i.e. use (a reference to their profession).

⁷marks of the pox.

They grudgéd, and said
 Their wages were not paid;
 Some said they were afraid
 Of the Scottish host, —
 For all their crake and boast,
 Wild fire and thunder,
 For all this worldly wonder,
 A hundred mile assunder
 They were when they were next¹ —
 That is the true text.

What hear ye of the Scots?
 They make us all sots,
 Popping foolish daws²!
 They make us to peel straws!
 They play their old pranks,
 After Huntly-banks:
 At the stream of Bannockburn
 They did us a shrewd turn,
 When Edward of Carnarvon
 Lost all that his father won.

What hear ye of the Lord Dacres?
 He maketh us Jack Rakers!
 He says we are but crakers!
 He calleth us England men
 Strong-hearted like an hen!
 For the Scots and he
 Too well they do agree,
 With “Do thou for me,
 And I shall do for thee!”
 Whiles the Red Hat doth endure
 He maketh himself cocksure;
 The Red Hat with his lure
 Bringeth all things under cure.⁴

¹nearest. ²i.e. Jibbering idiots.

³The Warden of the West Marches. ⁴care.

*But, as the world now goes,
What hear ye of the Lord Rose¹?*
 Nothing to purpose,
 Not worth a cockly fose:
 Their hearts be in their hose!
 The Earl of Northumberland
 Dare take nothing on hand!
 Our barons be so bold
 In a household they wold²
 Run away and creep!
 Like a meiny of sheep,
 Dare not look out at dur
 For dread of the mastif cur,³
 For dread of the butcher's dog
 Would worry them like an hog!

For, an this cur do gnar,⁴
 They must stand all afar,
 To hold up their hand at the Bar.
 For all their noble blood
 He plucks them by the hood,
 And shakes them by the ear,
 And brings them in such fear!
 He baiteth them like a bear,
 Like an ox or a bull.
 Their wits, he saith, are dull;
 He saith they have no brain
 Their estate⁵ to maintain;
 And maketh them to bow their knee
 Before his majestie.
 Judges of the king's laws,
 He counts them fools and daws;
 Sargeants of the Coif eke,
 He saith they are to seek
 In pleading of their case.

¹i.e. Lord Roos, Warden of the East Marches. ²would.

³i.e. Wolsey; so in next line. ⁴snarl. ⁵position.

At the Common Place,¹
 Or at the King's Bench,
 He wringeth them such a wrench
 That all our learned men
 Dare not set their pen
 To plead a true triall
 Within Westminster Hall.
 In the Chancery, where he sits,
 But such as he admits,
 None so hardy to speak!
 He sayth, "Thou hoddipeke,²
 Thy learning is too lewd,³
 Thy tongue is not well-thewd⁴
 To seek before our Grace!"
 And openly, in that place,
 He rages and he raves,
 And calls them "cankered knaves"⁵!
 Thus royally he doth deal
 Under the king's broad seal;
 And in the 'Chequer he them checks!
 In the Star Chamber he nods and becks,
 And beareth him there so stout
 That no man dare rowt⁶!
 Duke, earl, baron, nor lord,
 But to his sentence must accord;
 Whether he be knight or squire,
 All men must follow his desire.

What say ye of the Scottish king?
 That is another thing.
 He is but a youngling,
 A stalworthy stripling!
 There is a whisp'ring and a whipling
 He should be hither brought;
 But, an it were well sought,

i.e. Pleas. ²blockhead. ³too mean.
 ⁴well-mannered. ⁵belch.

I trow all will be nought!
Not worth a shuttle-cock,
Not worth a sour calstock¹!
There goeth many a lie
Of the Duke of Albany,
That off should go his head,
And brought in quick or dead,
And all Scotland ours
The mountenance of two hours.
But, as some men sayn,
I dread of some false train
Subtily wrought shall be
Under a feigned treatie.
But, within months three,
Men may haply see
The treachery and the pranks
Of the Scottish banks!

*What hear ye of Burgonions,²
And the Spaniard's onions?*
They have slain our Englishmen,
Above threescore and ten:
For all your amitie
No better they agree!

God save my Lord Admiral!

What hear ye of Mutrell³?
Therewith I dare not mell!

*Yet what hear ye tell
Of our Grand Council?*
I could say somewhat . . .
But speak ye no more of that,

¹cabbage-stalk.

²Burgundians.

³Montreuil. Refers to the suspicion during the autumn of 1522 that a French fleet was gathering there to invade England.

For drede of the Red Hat
 Take pepper in the nose,¹ —
 For then thine head off goes,
 Off by the hard arse!
 But there is some travarse²
 Between some and some
 That maketh our sire to glum.
 It is somewhat wrong
 That his beard is so long!
 He mourneth in black clothing.
 I pray God save the king!
 Wherever he go or ride
 I pray God be his guide!
 Thus will I conclude my style,
 And fall to rest a while,
 And so to rest a while.

*Once yet again
 Of you I would frain,³
 Why come ye not to court?
 To which court?
 To the king's court,
 Or to Hampton Court?
 Nay, to the king's court!
 The king's court
 Should have the excellency,
 But Hampton Court
 Hath the preēminence,
 And York's Place,⁴
 With my Lord's Grace!
 To whose magnificence
 Is all the confluence,
 Suits and supplications,*

¹For fear that the Cardinal take offence.

²conference. ³inquire.

⁴Wolsey's palace as Archbishop of York in Whitehall. After his disgrace it became a royal residence, together with Hampton Court, which, at an earlier date, he himself gave to the king.

Embassades of all nations.
Straw for Law Canon,
Or for the Law Common,
Or for the Law Civil!
It shall be as he will:
Stop at Law Tancrete,
An abstract or a concrete,
Be it sour, be it sweet,
His wisdom is so discreet
That, in a fume or an heat,
“Warden of the Fleet,
Set him fast by the feet!”
And of his royal power,
When him list to lower,
Then, “Have him to the Tower,
Sans auiter remedy!
Have him forth, by and by,
To the Marshalsea,
Or to the King’s Bench!”
He diggeth so in the trench
• Of the Court Royall
That he ruleth them all!
So he doth undermin¹,
And such sleights doth find,
That the king’s mind
By him is subverted,
And so straitly coarcted
In credencing his tales
That all is but nut-shales
That any other saith –
He hath in him such faith.

Now, yet all this might be
Suffered and taken in gre²
If that that he wrought
To any good end were brought:

¹undermine.

²taken kindly. •

But all he bringeth to nought,
 By God, that me dear bought!
 He beareth the king on hand,¹
 That he must poll his land
 To make his coffers rich;
 But he layeth all in the ditch,
 And useth such abusion
 That in the conclusion
 All cometh to confusion.

Perceive ye the cause why?
 To tell the truth plainly,
 He is so ambitious,
 So shameless, and so vicious,
 And so superstitious,
 And so much oblivious
 From whence that he came
 That he falleth in a *caeciam*, —
 Which, truly to express,
 Is a forgetfulness,
 Or wilful blindness,
 Wherewith the Sodomites
 Lost their inward sights:
 The Gomorrhians also
 Were brought to deadly woe,
 As Scripture recordis:
*A caecitate cordis,*²
 (In the Latin sing we)
Libera nos, Domine!

But this mad Amaleck,
 Like to a Mamelek,³
 He regardeth lords
 No more than potshards⁴!
 He is in such elation

¹persuades the king.

²From blindness of heart,
 Deliver us, O Lord!

³Mameluke.

⁴potsherds.

Of his exaltation,
 And the supportation
 Of our Sovereign Lord,
 That, God to record,
 He ruleth all at will
 Without reason or skill!
 Howbeit, the primordial
 Of his wretched original,
 And his base progeny,
 And his greasy genealogy,
 He came of the sang royall
 That was cast out of a butcher's stall!

But however he was born,
 Men would have the less scorn
 If he could consider
 His birth and room¹ togider,
 And call to his mind
 How noble and how kind
 To him he hath found
 • Our Sovereign Lord, chief ground
 Of all this' prelacy,
 That set him nobly
 In great authority
 Out from a low degree,
 Which he cannot see:
 For he was, pardé,
 No doctor of divinity,
 Nor doctor of the law,
 Nor of none other saw:
 But a poor maister of art!
 God wot, had little part
 Of the quatrivials,
 Nor yet of trivials,²

¹place, office.

²The two school courses of the time: (1) higher, (2) lower. i.e.
 (1) astrology, astronomy, geometry, arithmetic, music; (2) grammar,
 rhetoric, logic. (See p. 265.)

Nor of philosophy,
Nor of philology,
Nor of good policy,
Nor of astronomy,—
Nor acquainted worth a fly
With honourable Haly,
Nor with royal Ptolemy,
Nor with Albumazar,
To treat of any star
Fixed or else mobil.
His Latin tongue doth hobbil,
He doth but clout and cobbil
In Tully's faculty
Calléd humanity!
Yet proudly he dare pretend
How no man can him amend.
But have ye not heard this, —
How a one-eyed man is
Well-sighted when
He is among blind men?

Then, our process for to stable,
This man was full unable
To reach to such degree
Had not our Prince be
Royal Henry the Eight,
Taken him in such conceit
That he set him on height,
In exemplifying
Great Alexander the king.
In writing as we find
Which (of his royal mind,
And of his noble pleasure,
Transcending out of measure)
Thought to do a thing
That pertaineth to a king —
To take up one of nought,
• And made to him be brought

A wretched poor man,
 Which his living wan
 With planting of leeks
 By the days and by the weeks;
 And of this poor vassal
 He made a king royal;
 And gave him a realm to rule
 That occupied a shule,¹
 A mattock, and a spade,
 Before that he was made
 A king, as I have told,
 And ruled as he wold.
 Such is a king's power, —
 To make within an hour,
 And work such a miracle
 That shall be a spectacle
 Of renown and worldly fame.
 In likewise now the same
 Cardinal is promoted,
 Yet with lewd conditions coated,
 As hereafter be noted, —
 Presumption and vain glory,
 Envy, wrath, and lechery,
 Couvetise and gluttony,
 Slothful to do good,
 Now frantic, now stark wood²!

Should this man, of such mood,
 Rule the sword of might?
 How can he do right?
 For he will as soon smite
 His friend as his foe!
 A proverb long ago:
 Set up a wretch on high
 In a throne triumphantly,
 Make him a great estate,

¹used a shovel.

²mad.

And he will play check-mate
 With royal majesty,
 Count himself as good as he!
 A prelate potential
 To rule under Belial,
 As fierce and as cruel
 As the Fiend of hell!
 His servants meniall
 He doth revile and brall
 Like Mahound¹ in a play.
 No man dare him withsay:
 He hath despight and scorn
 At them that be well-born;
 He rebukes them and rails
 "Ye whoresons! Ye vassails!
 Ye knaves! Ye churls' sonnés!
 Ye ribalds, not worth two plummés!
 Ye rain-beaten beggers rejagged!"
 With "Stoop, thou havell!
 Run, thou javell!
 Thou peevish pie pecked!
 Thou losell long-necked!"
 Thus, daily, they be decked,
 Taunted and checked,
 That they are so woe,
 They wot not whither to go!

No man dare come to the speech
 Of this gentle Jack-breech,
 Of what estate he be
 Of spiritual dignitie;
 Nor duke of high degree,
 Nor marquis, earl nor lord:
 Which shrewdly doth accord!
 Thus he, born so base,
 All noblemen should out-face,

¹Mahomet.

His countenance like a kayser.
 "My Lord is not at leisure!
 Sir, ye must tarry a stound,¹
 Till better leisure be found!
 And, sir, ye must dance attendance,
 And take patient sufferance,
 For my Lord's Grace
 Hath now no time nor space
 To speak with you as yet!"
 And thus they shall sit.
 Chose them sit or flit,
 Stand, walk, or ride,
 And at his leisure abide,
 Perchance, half a year,
 And yet never the near²!

This dangerous dousipeer,³
 Like a kingēs peer!
 And within this xvi. year
 He would have been right fain
 To have been a chaplain,
 And have taken right great pain
 With a poor knight,
 Whatsoever he hight.⁴
 The chief of his own counsel,
 They cannot well tell
 When they with him should mell,
 He is so fierce and fell!
 He rails and he rates,
 He calleth them "doddipates"⁵;

¹a moment.²i.e. nearer.³noble — actually, one of the *douze-pairs*, the twelve equals, or peers, of Charlemagne.⁴Sir Richard Nanfan, Deputy of Calais, whose chaplain Wolsey was, and who promised him his position as chaplain to King Henry VII.⁵blockheads.

He grins and he gapes,
 As it were jackanapes!
 Such a mad bedleme¹
 For to rule this reame,
 It is a wondrous case!
 That the King's Grace
 Is toward him so minded
 And so far blinded
 That he cannot perceive
 How he doth him deceive!
 I doubt lest by sorcery,
 Or such other loselry,²
 As witch-craft, or charming,
 For he is the king's darling,
 And his sweet heart-root!
 And is governed by this mad coot!
 For what is a man the better
 For the king's letter?
 For he will tear it assunder³!
 Whereat much I wonder
 How such a hoddipole
 So boldly dare control,
 And so malapertly withstand
 The king's own hand,
 And set not by it a mite!
 He saith the king doth write
 And writeth he wotteth not what!
 And yet, for all that,
 The king his clemency
 Dispenseth with his demensy.⁴

But what His Grace doth think
 I have no pen nor ink
 That therewith can mell;
 But well I can tell

¹bedlamite.

²villany.

³i.e. he will even tear up the king's letters.

⁴madness.

How Francis Petrarch,
 That much noble clerk,
 Writeth how Charlemagne
 Could not himself refrain,
 But was ravished with a rage
 Of a like dotage.
 But how that came about
 Read ye the story out,
 And ye shall find surely
 It was by necromancy,
 By carects¹ and conjuration
 Under a certain constellation,
 And a certain fumigation
 Under a stone on a gold ring,
 Wrought to Charlemagne the king;
 Which constrained him forcibly
 For to love a certain body
 Above all other inordinately.
 This is no fable nor no lie:
 At Acon² it was brought to pass,
 As by mine author tried it was.³
 But let my masters mathematical
 Tell you the rest! For me, they shall;
 They have the full intelligence,
 And dare use the experience,
 In their absolute conscience
 To practise such obsolete science:
 For I abhor to smatter
 Of one so devilish a matter.

But I will make further relation
 Of this isagogical collation,⁴
 How Maister Gaguin, the chronicler
 Of the feats of war
 That were done in France,

¹magical characters. ²Aix la Chapelle.

³See Petrarch, *Fam. Epist.*, lib. i. Ep. iii.

⁴i.e. comparison introduced.

Maketh remembrance
 How King Lewis, of late,
 Made up a great estate¹
 Of a poor wretched man,
 Whereof much care began.
 Johannes Balua was his name,
 Mine author writeth the same.
 Promoted was he
 To a cardinal's dignitie,
 By Lewis the king aforesaid,
 With him so well apayed²
 That he made him his chancellar
 To make all or to mar,
 And to rule as him list,
 Till he checked at the fist,³
 And, against all reason,
 Committed open treason
 Against his lord sovereign:
 Wherefore he suffered pain,
 Was 'headed, drawen, and quartered,
 And died stinkingly martyred.⁴
 Lo, yet for all that
 He wore a cardinal's hat,
 In him was small faith,
 As mine author saith —
 Not for that I mean
 Such a casualty should be seen,
 Or such chance should fall
 Unto our cardinal!

Almighty God, I trust,
 Hath for him discust⁵
 That of force he must
 Be faithful, true, and just

¹a person of great estate. ²satisfied.

³i.e. turned on the hand that fed him.

⁴This is incorrect. Cardinal Balua was confined by order of Louis XI in an iron cage at the Castle of Loches for eleven years. The rest of his life he spent prosperously in Italy. ⁵determined.

To our most royal king,
 Chief root of his making.
 Yet it is a wily mouse
 That can build his dwelling house
 Within the cat's ear,
 Withouten dread or fear!
 It is a nice reckoning
 To put all the governing,
 All the rule of this land
 Into one man's hand!
 One wise man's head
 May stand somewhat in stead:
 But the wits of many wise
 Much better can devise,
 By their circumspection,
 And their sad¹ direction,
 To cause the common weal
 Long to endure in heal.

Christ keep King Henry the Eight
 From treachery and deceit,
 And grant him grace to know
 The falcon from the crow,
 The wolf from the lamb,
 From whence that mastiff cam!
 Let him never confound
 The gentle greyhound!
 Of this matter the ground
 Is easy to expound,
 And soon may be perceivéd,
 How the world is conveyéd.

*But hark, my friend, one word
 In earnest or in bord²!
 Tell me now, in this stead,
 Is Maister Meautis dead,
 The king's French secretary,
 And his untrue adversary?*

¹grave.²jest.

*For he sent in writing
To Francis, the French king,
Of our maister's counsel in everything:
That was a perilous reckoning!*

Nay, nay, he is not dead,
But he was so pained in the head
That he shall never eat more bread!
Now he is gone to another stead
With a bull under lead,¹
By way of commission,
To a strange jurisdiction
Called Dimingis Dale,
Far beyond Portingale,
And hath his passport to pass
Ultra Sauromatas,
To the devil, Sir Sathanas,
To Pluto, and Sir Belial,
The Devil's vicar general,
And to his college conventional,
As well calodemonal,²
As to cacodemonal,³
To purvey⁴ for our cardinal
A palace pontifical,
To keep his court provincial,
Upon articles judicial,
To contend and to strive
For his prerogative,
Within that consistory
To make summons peremptory
Before some prothonotory
Imperial or papal.

Upon this matter mystical
I have told you part, but not all.
Hereafter perchance I shall
Make a larger memorial.

¹i.e. a seal.

²consisting of good angels.

³consisting of bad angels.

⁴provide.

And a further rehearsal,
 And more paper I think to blot,
 To the court why I came not:
 Desiring you above all thing
 To keep you from laughing
 When ye fall to reading
 Of this wanton scroll:
 And pray for Meautis' soul,
 For he is well past and gone!
 That, would God, every one
 Of his affinitie
 Were gone as well as he!
 Amen, amen, say ye,
 Of your inward charitie;
 Amen,
 Of your inward charitie!

It were great ruth,¹
 For writing of truth,
 Any man should be
 In perplexitie
 Of displeasure:
 For I make you sure,
 Where truth is abhored
 It is a plain record
 That there wants grace;
 In whose place
 Doth occupy,
 Full ungraciously,
 False Flattery,
 False Treachery,
 False Bribery,
 Subtle Sim Sly,
 With mad Folly;
 For who can best lie
 He is best set by.

¹pity.

Then farewell to thee,
 Wealthful Felicitie!
 For Prosperite
 Away then will flee!
 Then must we agree
 With Poverty;
 For Misery
 With Penury
 Miserably
 And wretchedly
 Hath made ascry
 And outcry,
 Following the chase
 To drive away Grace.
 Yet sayest thou perchace,¹
 We can lack no grace!
 For my lord's grace,
 And my lady's grace,
 With trey, deuce, ace,
 And ace in the face,
 Some haut and some base,²
 Some dance the trace³
 Ever in one case:
 Mark me that chase⁴
 In the tennis play,
 For sink quater trey
 Is a tall man:
 He rode, but we ran!
 Hay, the gye and the gan⁵!
 The gray goose is no swan!
 The waters wax wan,
 And beggars they ban,
 And they cursed Datan,

¹perchance.²high . . . low.³path, track.⁴i.e. Mark well that point.⁵the goose and the gander — a play on the words, referring to the dance *heydegaries*.

De tribu Dan,
 That this work began,
Palam et clam,
 With Balak and Balam,
 The golden ram
 Of Fleming dam,
 Shem, Japhet, or Ham.

But how come to pass
 Your cupboard that was
 Is turned to glass?
 From silver to brass,
 From gold to pewter?
 Or else to a neuter,
 To copper, to tin,
 To lead, or alcumin?
 A goldsmith your mayor¹;
 But the chief of your fair
 Might stand now by potters,
 And such as sell trotters,
 Pitchers, potshards!
 This shrewdly accords
 To be a cupboard for lords!

My lord now, and sir knight,
 Good-even and good-night!
 For now, Sir Tristram²
 You must wear buckram,
 Or canvas of Caen,
 For silks are wane.³
 Our royals⁴ that shone,
 Our nobles⁴ are gone

¹i.e. Sir John Mundy, a member of the Goldsmiths' Company, who became Lord Mayor of London on October 28th (the old Lord Mayor's Day), 1522.

²i.e. any knight

³decreased.

⁴The coins so called.

Among the Burgonions,¹
 And Spaniards' onions,
 And the Flanderkins.
 Jill sweats, and Kate spins,
 They are happy that wins;
 But England may well say,
 "Fie on this winning alway!
 Now nothing but pay, pay!"²
 With, "Laugh and lay down,"³
 Borough, city, and town.

Good Spring of Langham
 Must count what became
 Of his cloth-making:
 He is at such taking,
 Though his purse wax dull
 He must tax for his wull⁴
 By nature of a new writ.
 My Lord's Grace nameth it
A quia non satisficit:
 In the spight of his teeth
 He must pay again
 A thousand or twain
 Of his gold in store;
 And yet he paid before
 An hundred pound and more,
 Which pincheth him sore.
 My Lord's Grace will bring
 Down this high spring,
 And bring it so low
 It shall not ever flow!

Such a prelate, I trow,
 Were worthy to row
 Through the straits of Marock⁴

¹Burgundians.

²A punning allusion to the game of cards so called.
³i.e. pay tax for his wool.

⁴Morocco.

To the jibbet of Baldock!
 He would dry up the streams
 Of ix. kings' reams,
 All rivers and wells,
 All waters that swells!
 For with us he so mells,
 That within England dwells,
 I would he were somewhere else:
 For else by and by
 He will drink us so dry,
 And suck us so nigh,
 That men shall scanty
 Have penny or halfpenny.
 God save his noble Grace,
 And grant him a place
 Endless to dwell
 With the Devil of hell!
 For, an he were there,
 We need never fear
 Of the fiends blake¹:
 For I undertake
 He would so brag and crake
 That he would then make
 The devils to quake,
 To shudder and to shake,
 Like a fire-drake,²
 And with a coal-rake
 Bruise them on the brake,³
 And bind them to a stake,
 And set all hell on fire
 At his own desire.
 He is such a grim sire,
 He is such a potestolate,⁴
 And such a potestate,⁵
 That he would break the brains

¹black.²dragon.³An engine of torture.⁴legate.⁵chief magistrate.

Of Lucifer in his chains,
 And rule them each one
 In Lucifer's throne.
 I would he were gone:
 For among us is none
 That ruleth but he alone,
 Without all good reason,
 And all out of season:
 For Fulham peason¹
 With him be not geson²!
 They grow very rank
 Upon every bank
 Of his herbers green,
 With my lady bright and sheen.
 On their game it is seen
 They play not all clean,
 An it be as I ween.

But as touching discretion,
 With sober direction,
 He keepeth them in subjection.
 They can have no protection
 To rule nor to guide;
 But all must be tried,
 And abide the correction
 Of his wilful affection.
 For as for wit,
 The Devil speed wit!
 But brainsick and brainless,
 Witless and reckless,
 Careless and shameless,
 Thriftless and graceless,
 Together are bended,³
 And so condescended,⁴
 That the commonwealth
 Shall never have good health:

¹pease.²rare.³banded.⁴agreed.

But tattered and tuggéd,
 Ragged and ruggéd,
 Shaven and shorn,
 And all thread-bare worn.
 Such greediness,
 Such neediness,
 Miserableness,
 With wretchedness,
 Hath brought in distress
 And much heaviness
 And great dolour
 England, the floure
 Of reluent honour,
 In old commemoration
 Most royal English nation.
 Now all is out of fashion,
 Almost in desolation.
 I speak by protestation:
 God of his miseration
 Send better reformation!

Lo, for to do shamefully
 He judgeth it no folly!
 But to write of his shame
 He saith we are to blame.
 What a frenzy is this –
 No shame to do amiss,
 And yet he is ashamed
 To be shamefully named!
 And oft preachers be blamed
 Because they have proclaimed
 His madness by writing,
 His simpleness reciting,
 Remording and biting,
 With chiding and with flighting,¹
 Shewing him God's laws:

¹scolding.

He calleth the preachers daws!
And of holy scripture's saws
He counteth them for gee-gaws,
And putteth them to silence
With words of violence,
Like Pharaoh, void of grace,
Did Moses sore menace,
And Aaron sore he threat,
The word of God to let¹:
This mawmet in like wise
Against the Church doth rise.
The preacher he doth dispise,
With craking in such wise,
So bragging all with boast,
That no preacher almost
Dare speak for his life
Of my Lord's Grace, nor his wife!
For he hath such a bull
He may take whom he wull,
And as many as him likes;
May eat pigs in Lent for pikes,
After the sects of heretics!
For in Lent he will eat
All manner of flesh meat
That he can anywhere gete;
With other abusions great,
Wherof for to treat
It would make the Devil to sweat!
For all privileged places
He breaks and defaces!
All places of religion
He hath them in derision!
And maketh such provision
To drive them at division;
And finally in conclusion
To bring them to confusion.

¹hinder.

Saint Albans, to record,
 Whereof this ungracious lord
 Hath made himself abbot,
 Against their wills, God wot!
 All this he doth deal
 Under strength of the great seal,
 And by his legacy¹:
 Which madly he doth apply
 Unto an extravagancy
 Picked out of all good law,
 With reasons that be raw.

Yet, when he took first his hat,
 He said he knew what was what;
 All justice he pretended,
 All things should be amended,
 All wrongs he would redress,
 All injuries he would repress,
 All purjuries he would oppress!
 And yet this graceless elf,
 He is purjured himself!
 As plainly it doth appear
 Who list to inquire
 In the registery
 Of my Lord of Canterbury,
 To whom he was professed
 In three points expressed:
 The first, to do him reverence:
 The second, to owe obedience:
 The third, with whole affection
 To be under his subjection.
 But now he maketh objection,
 Under the protection
 Of the king's great seal,
 That he setteth never a deal
 By his former oath,

¹legative power.

Whether God be pleased or wroth!
 He maketh so proud pretence,
 That in his *equipollens*
 He judgeth him equivalent
 To God omnipotent!
 But yet beware the rod,
 And the stroke of God!

The apostle Peter
 Had a poor mitre
 And a poor cope
 When he was create Pope,
 First in Antioche.
 He did never approach
 Of Rome to the See
 With such dignitie.

Saint Dunstan, what was he?
 Nothing, he saith, like to me!
 There is a diversitie
 Between him and me:
 We pass him in degree,
 As *legatus a latere*!

*Ecce, sacerdos magnus,*¹
 That will 'head us and hang us,
 And straightly strangle us
 An he may fang² us!
 Decree and decretal,
 Constitution provincial,
 Nor no law canonical,
 Shall let the priest pontifical
 To sit in *causa sanguinis*.
 Now God amend what is amiss!
 For I suppose that he is
 Of Jeremy the whisking rod,
 The flail, the scourge of Almighty God.

¹Behold the great priest.

²catch hold of.

This Naaman Sirus,¹
 So fell and irous,²
 So full of melancholy,
 With a flap afore his eye,
 Men ween that he is poxy,³
 Or else his surgeons they lie
 For, as far as they can spy
 By the craft of surgery
 It is *manus Domini!*
 And yet this proud Antiochus,
 He is so ambitious,
 So elate, and so vicious,
 And so cruel-hearted,
 That he will not be converted:
 For he setteth God apart!
 He is now so overthwart,
 And so pained with pangs,
 That all his trust hangs
 In Balthasar,⁴ which healed
 Domingo's nose that was wealed:
 That Lombard's nose mean I
 That standeth yet awry;
 It was not healed alderbest,⁵
 It standeth somewhat on the west!
 I mean Domingo Lomelin
 That was wont to win
 Much money of the king
 At the cards and hasarding:
 Balthasar, that healed Domingo's nose
 From the pustuled poxy pose,
 Now with his gums of Arabie
 Hath promised to heal our cardinal's eye.

¹i.e. the Syrian.²So fierce and irate.³This was one of the charges afterwards brought against Wolsey in Parliament.⁴Balthasar de Guercis, surgeon to Catherine of Arragon.⁵thoroughly.

Yet some surgeons put a doubt
 Lest he will put it clean out,
 And make him lame of his nether limbs:
 God send him sorrow for his sins!

Some men might ask a question,
 By whose suggestion
 I took on hand this wark,
 Thus boldly for to bark?
 And, men, list to hark,
 And my words mark,
 I will answer like a clerk: —
 For, truly and unfeigned,
 I am forcibly constrained
 At Juvenal's request
 To write of this glorious geste,
 Of this vain-glorious beast,
 His fame to be increased
 At every solemn feast;
Quia difficile est
*Satiram non scribere*¹!

Now, master doctor, how say ye?
 Whatsoever your name be,
 What though ye be nameless,
 Ye shall not escape blameless,
 Nor yet shall 'scape shameless!
 Maister doctor, in your degree,
 Yourself madly ye over-see!
 Blame Juvenal, and blame not me!
 Maister doctor Diricum,
Omne animi vitium, etc.² —
 As Juvenal doth record,
 A small default in a great lord,
 A little crime in a great estate,
 Is much more inordinate,

“Because it is difficult not to write satire” (Juvenal, *Sat.* i. 30).
 “Every vice of the soul . . .” (Juvenal. *Sat.* viii. 140).

And more horrible to behold,
Than any other a thousand fold.
Ye put to blame ye wot ne'er whom!
Ye may wear a cock's-comb!
Your fond head in your furréd hood!
Hold ye your tongue, ye can no good!
And at more convenient time
I may fortune for to rime
Somewhat of your madness;
For small is your sadness
To put any man in lack,¹
And say ill behind his back.

And my words mark truly,
That ye cannot bide thereby,
For smigma non est sinamonum,
But de absentibus nil nisi bonum.
Complain, or do what ye will,
Of your complaint it shall not skill:
This is the tenor of my bill,
A dawcock ye be, and so shall be still!

¹blame.

A REPLICATION

Honorificatissimo, amplissimo, longeque reverendissimo in Christo patri, ac Domino, domino Thomæ, etc., tituli sanctae Ceciliae, sacrosantæ Romanae ecclesiae presbytero, Cardinali meritissimo, et apostolicae sedis legato, a latereque legato superillustri, etc., Skeltonis laureatus, or. reg., humillimum dicit obsequium cum omni debita reverentia, tanto tamque magnifico digna principe sacerdotum, totiusque justitiae aequalissimo moderatore, necnon præsentis opusculi fauore excellentissimo, etc., ad cuius auspiciatissimam contemplationem, sub memorabili prelo gloriosae immortalitatis, præsens pagella felicitatur, etc.¹

A REPLICATION AGAINST CERTAIN YOUNG SCHOLARS ABJURED OF LATE²

ARGUMENTUM

*Crassantes nimium, nimium sterilesque labruscas,
Vinea quas Domini Sabao non sustinet ultra
Laxius expandi, nostra est resecare voluntas.*³

¹To the most honourable, most mighty, and by far the most reverend father in Christ and in the Lord, Lord Thomas, etc., of the title of the sacred Cecilian, presbyter of the Holy Roman Church, the most deserving cardinal, Legate of the Apostolic See, and the most illustrious legate *a latere*, etc., Skelton Laureate, *ora. reg.*, declares humble allegiance with all fit reverence due to such a great and magnificent Chief of Priests, most equitable moderator of all justice, and moreover the most excellent patron of the present little book, etc., to whose most auspicious judgement [*or* at whose most auspicious contemplation, i.e. command], under the memorable seal[?] of a glorious immortality, the present little treatise is commended [*or* devised – see L’envoy].

²Friedrich Brie (*Skelton-Studien*) has shewn that two young scholars, Thomas Bilney and Thomas Arthur, were abjured on December 8th, 1527, and that there is every reason for supposing that the following refers to them. This places the *Replication* as Skelton’s last known poem.

³The too sour, and too unfruitful, wild grapes, which the vineyard of the Lord Sabaoth does not suffer to flourish more luxuriously, it is our desire to cut down.

*Cum privilegio a rege indulto.*¹

Protestation alway canonically prepensed, professed, and with good deliberation made, that this little pamphlet, called The Replication of Skelton Laureate, *ora. reg.*, remordring divers recrayed² and much unreasonable errors of certain sophisticate scholars and reckless young heretics lately abjured, etc., shall evermore be, with all obsequious readiness, humbly submitted unto the right discreet reformation of the reverend prelates and much noble doctors of our Mother Holy Church, etc.

*Ad almam Universitatem Cantabrigensem.*³EULOGIUM CONSOLATIONIS⁴

*Alma parens, O Cantabrigensis,
Cur lacrymaris? Esto, tui sint
Degeneres hi filioli, sed
Nos ob inertes, O pia mater,
Insciolos vel decolor esto.
Progenies non nobilis omnis,
Quam tua forsan mamma fovebat.
Tu tamen esto Palladis almae
Gloria pollens plena Minervæ,
Dum radiabunt astra polorum:
Namque valeto, meque foveato,
Namque tibi quondam carus alumnus eram.*⁵

¹With the privilege conceded by the king.

²recreant.

³To the bountiful University of Cambridge.

⁴Eulogy of Consolation.

⁵Bountiful mother, O Cambridge, why dost thou weep? [or why art thou wept for?] So be it, let these little sons of thine be degenerate . . . [?] All the ignoble progeny which perchance your breasts have suckled. But be thou the full blooming glory of Pallas Minerva, so long as the stars of the poles shall shine. And now farewell, and look kindly upon me, for I was once your dear nursling.

How young scholars nowadays enbolned¹ with the fly-blown blast of the much vain-glorious pippling wind, when they have delectably licked a little of the licorous electuary of lusty² learning, in the much studious school-house of scrupulous Philology, counting themselves clerks excellently informed and transcendingly sped³ in much high conning, and when they have once superciliously caught

A little rag of rhetoric,
 A less lump of logic,
 A piece or a patch of philosophy,
 Then forthwith by and by
 They tumble so in theology,
 Drowned in dregs of divinity,
 That they judge them self able to be
 Doctors of the chair in the Vintrie
 At the Three Cranes,⁴
 To magnify their names!
 But madly it frames,
 For all that they preach and teach
 Is further than their wit will reach.
 Thus by demerits of their abusion,
 Finally they fall to careful confusion
 To bear a fagot, or to be enflamed⁵:
 Thus are they undone and utterly shamed.

Ergo:

Licet non enclitice,
Tamen enthymematice,
Notandum imprimis,
Ut ne quid nimis.

*Tantum pro primo.*⁶

Over this, for a more ample process to be further related and continued, and of every true Christenman laudably to

¹puffed up. ²pleasant. ³versed. ⁴tavern so called. ⁵burned.

⁶Therefore: . . . It must be noted in the first place that nothing may be in excess. So much for the first, or in the first place.

be employed, justified, and constantly maintained; as touching the sour theologisation of these demi divines, and Stoical students, and friskajolly younkerkins, much better bained¹ than brained, basked and bathed in their wild burbling and boiling blood, fervently reboiled with the infatuate flames of their reckless youth and witless wantonness, embraced and interlaced with a much fantastical frenzy of their insensate sensuality, surmised unsurely in their periermenial principles, to prate and to preach proudly and lewdly, and loudly to lie; and yet they were but feebly informed in Master Porphyry's problems, and have waded but weakly in his three manner of clerkly works, analytical, topical, and logical: howbeit they were puffed so full of vain-glorious pomp and arrogant elation, that popeholly and peevish presumption provoked them to publish and to preach to people imprudent perilously, how it was idolatry to offer to images of our Blessed Lady, or to pray and go on pilgrimages, or to make oblations to any images of saints in churches or elsewhere.

Against which erroneous errors, odious, orgulous,² and fly-blown opinions, etc.,

To the honour of our Blessed Lady,
 And her most Blessed Baby,
 I purpose for to reply
 Against this horrible heresy
 Of these young heretics, that stink unbrent,³
 Whom I now summon and convenant;
 That lewdly have their time spent
 In their study abominable,
 Our glorious Lady to disable,
 And heinously on her to babble
 With language detestable!
 With your lips polluted
 Against Her Grace disputed,
 Which is the most clear crystal
 Of all pure cleanness virginal,

¹boned.

²insolent.

³unburnt.

That our Saviour bear,
Which us redeemed from care.

I say, thou mad March hare,
I wonder how ye dare
Open your jangling jaws
To preach in any clause,
Like prating popping daws,
Against her excellence,
Against her reverence,
Against her pre-eminence,
Against her magnificence,
That never did offence.

Ye heretics recrayed,¹
Wot ye what ye said
Of Mary, mother and maid?
With bawdry at her ye brayed!
With bawdy words unmeet
Your tongues were too fleet;
Your sermon was not sweet;
Ye were nothing discreet;
Ye were in a drunken heat!
Like heretics confettered,
Ye count yourselves well-lettered!
Your learning is stark nougħt,
For shamefully ye have wrought,
And to shame yourselves have brought.

Because ye her misnamed,
And would have her defamed,
Your madness she attamed;
For ye were worldly shamed
At Paul's Cross openly,
All men can testify.
There, like a sort² of sots,
Ye were fain to bear faggots;

¹recreant.

²set.

At the feast of her Conception
Ye suffered such correction.

Sive per aequivocum,¹
Sive per univocum,²
Sive sic, sive not so,³
 Ye were brought to, Lo, lo, lo!
 See where the heretics go,
 Witless, wandering to and fro!
 With Te he, ta ha, bo ho, bo ho!
 And such wanderings many mo.
 Helas, ye wretches, ye may be woe!
 Ye may sing well-a-way,
 And curse both night and day
 When ye were bred and born,
 And when ye were priestes shorn,
 Thus to be laughed to scorn,
 Thus tattered and thus torn!
 Thorough your own folly
 Ye be blowen with the fly
 Of horrible heresy!
 Fain ye were to reny,⁴
 And mercy for to cry,
 Or be burnt by and by,
 Confessing how ye did lie
 In preaching shamefully.

Yourselves thus ye discured,
 As clerks unassured,
 With ignorance obscured!
 Ye are unhappily vred.⁵
 In your dialetical,
 And principles syllogistical,
 If ye to remembrance call

¹Either through the equivocal. ²Or through the unequivocal.

³Or so or not so.

⁴renounce.

⁵discovered.

⁶ill-fortuned.

How *syllogisari*
Non est ex particulari,
Neque negativis,
Recte concludere si vis,
*Et caetera, id genus.*¹
 Ye could not *corde tenuis*,²
 Nor answer *verbo tenuis*,³
 When prelacy you opposed;
 Your heartēs then were hosed,⁴
 Your relations reposéd;
 And yet ye supposed
*Respondere ad quantum.*⁵
 But ye were *confuse tantum*,⁶
 Surrendering your suppositions,
 For there ye missed your cushions.

Would God, for your own ease,
 That wise Harpocrates⁷
 Had your mouthēs stopped,
 And your tonguēs cropped,
 When ye logic chopped,
 And in the pulpit hopped,
 And foolishly there fopped,
 And porishly forth popped
 Your schismaticate saws
 Against Goddēs laws,
 And shewēd yourselves daws!⁸
 Ye argued argumentēs,
 As it were upon the elenkes,⁹
*De rebus apparentibus*¹⁰

¹How to syllogise, it is not from the particular, nor from negatives, if you want to conclude rightly, etc., in a case like this.

²in your heart (or as far as the heart).

³in your name (or as far as the word).

⁴in your hose.

⁵to give your opinion so much.

⁶so much confounded.

⁷Egyptian God of Silence.

⁸simpletons.

⁹elenchus— i.e. in logic.

¹⁰concerning apparent things.

Et non existentibus¹;
 And ye would appear wise,
 But ye were foolish nice²!
 Yet by means of that 'vice³
 Ye did provoke and 'tice,
 Oftener than once or twice,
 Many a good man
 And many a good woman,
 By way of their devotion
 To help you to promotion,
 Whose charity well regarded
 Cannot be unrewarded.

I say it for no sedition,
 But under patient tuition –
 It is half a superstition
 To give you exhibition⁴
 To maintain with your schools,
 And to prove yourselves such fools!

Some of you had ten pound,
 Therewith for to be found⁵
 At the university,
 Employed which might have be
 Much better other ways.
 But, as the man says,
 The blind eateth many a fly!
 What may be meant hereby
 Ye may soon make construction
 With right little instruction;
 For it is an ancient bruit,⁶
 Such apple-tree, such fruit.
 What should I prosecute,
 Or more of this to clatter?
 Return we to our matter.

¹And non-existent.

²i.e. altogether foolish.

³device.

⁴A scholarship.

⁵maintained.

⁶saying.

Ye soared over-high
 In the hierarchy
 Of Jovenian's heresy,
 Your names to magnify,
 Among the scabbéd skies,
 Of Wyclif's flesh-flies;
 Ye stringed so Luther's lute
 That ye dance all in a suit
 The heretics' ragged ray,²
 That brings you out of the way
 Of Holy Church's lay,³
 Ye shail *inter enigmata*,⁴
 And *inter paradigmata*,⁵
 Marked in your cradles
 To bear faggots for baubles.

And yet some men say
 How ye are this day,
 And be now as ill,
 And so ye will be still,
 As ye were before.
 What should I reckon more?

Men have you in suspicion
 How ye have small contrition
 Of that ye have miswrought.
 For, if it were well sought,
 One of you there was
 That laughed when he did pass
 With his faggot in procession!
 He counted it for no correction,
 But with scornful affection
 Took it for a sport,
 His heresy to support!
 Whereat a thousand gazed
 As people half-amazed,

¹clouds. • ²A dance. • ³law. • ⁴stumble among riddles
 • ⁵among paradigms.

And thought in him small grace
His folly so to face.¹

Some judged in this case
Your penance took no place,
Your penance was too light;
And thought, if ye had right,
Ye should take further pain
To resort again
To places where ye have preached,
And your lollardy² learning teached,
And there to make relation
In open prediction,
And 'knowledge your offence
Before open audience, —
How falsely ye had surmised,
And devilishly devised
The people to seduce,
And chase them through the mews³
Of your naughty counsell,
To hunt them into hell
With blowing out your horns,
Full of mockish scorns,
With chating and rechating,⁴
And your busy prating!
Of the gospel and the epistles
Ye pick out many thistles,
And brimly⁵ with your bristles
Ye cobble and ye clout
Holy Scripture so about
That people are in great doubt
And fear lest they be out
Of all good Christian order.
Thus all thing ye disorder
Throughout every border.

¹vaunt.

²heretical.

³alley, side-track

⁴sound the retreat in hunting.

⁵fiercely.

It had been much better
 Ye had never learned a letter,
 For your ignorance is greater
 (I make you fast and sure)
 Than all your literature.
 Ye are but lither *logici*,¹
 But much worse *isagogici*,
 For ye have induced a sect
 With heresy all infect.
 Wherefore ye are well checked,
 And by Holy Church correct,
 And in manner as abject,
 For evermore suspect,
 And banished in effect
 From all honest company,
 Because ye have eaten a fly,
 To your great villany,
 That never more may die!

Come forth, ye popeholys,
 Full of melancholy!
 Your mad hypocrisy,
 And your idiocy,
 And your vain-glory,
 Have made you eat the fly,
 Puffed full of heresy,
 To preach it idolatry
 Whoso doth magnify
 That glorious maid Mary;
 That glorious maid and mother,
 So was there never another
 But that princess alone,
 To whom we are bound, each one,
 The image of her grace
 To reverence in every place.

¹bad logicians.

I say, ye brainless beasts,
 Why jangle you such jests?
 In your divinity
 Of Luther's affinity!
 To the people of lay fee¹
 Railing in your rages
 To worship none images,
 Nor do pilgrimages!
 I say, ye devilish pages,
 Full of such dotages,
 Count ye yourselves good clerks,
 And snapper² in such works?

Saint Gregory and Saint Ambrose,
 Ye have read them, I suppose?
 Saint Jerome and Saint Austen,
 With other many holy men?
 Saint Thomas de Aquino,
 With other doctors many mo,
 Which *de latria*³ do treat?
 They say how *latria* is an honour great
 Belonging to the Deity:
 To this ye needs must agree.

But, I trow, yourselves ye oversee⁴
 What 'longeth to Christ's humanitie!
 If ye have read *de hyperdulia*,
 Then ye know what betokeneth *dulia*.⁵
 Then shall ye find it firm and stable,
 And to our faith much agreeable
 To worship images of saints.
 Wherefore make ye no more restraints,

¹laity.²stumble.³of worship.⁴overlook.

⁵i.e. If you have read of the very great adoration accorded to the Virgin — *hyperdulia* — then you know what worship is due to the Saints — *dulia*.

But mend your minds that are mazed;
 Or else doubtless ye shall be blazed,
 And be burnt at a stake,¹
 If further business that ye make.
 Therefore I 'vise you to forsake
 Of heresy the devilish schools,
 And cry Godmercy, like frantic fools!

*Tantum pro secundo.*²

PERORATIO AD NUPER ABJURATOS QUOSDAM
 HYPOTHETICOS HERETICOS, ETC.³

Audite, viri Ismaelitae, non dico Israelitae;
Audite, inquam, viri Madianitae, Ascalonitae;
*Ammonitae, Gabaonitae, audite verba que loquar.*⁴

Opus evangelii est cibus perfectorum;
Sed quia non estis de genere bonorum,
Qui caterisatis categorias cacodaemoniorum,

Ergo

Et reliqua vestra problemata, schemata,
Dilemmata, sinto anathemata!
*Ineluctabile argumentum est.*⁵

¹Bilney was burnt in 1531, two years after Skelton's death.

²So much for the second, or in the second place.

³The peroration against certain recently abjured hypothetical heretics.

⁴Hear, men of Ishmael, I do not say Israel;
 Hear, say I, men of Madian, of Askalon,
 Of Ammon, of Gabion, hear the words I shall speak.

⁵The Book of the Gospel is the food of the perfect; but, because you are not from the race of the good, you who "caterise" [make improper use of (?)] the categories of the inspired, therefore also the rest of your problems, schemes, dilemmas, may they be anathema! It is an inescapable argument.

A confutation responsive, or an inevitably prepensed answer to all wayward or froward altercations that can or may be made or objected against Skelton Laureate, devisor of this Replication, etc.

Why fall ye at debate
With Skelton Laureate,
Reputing him unable
To gainsay replicable
Opinions detestable
Of heresy execrable?

Ye say that poetry
May not fly so high
In theology,
Nor analogy,
Nor philology,
Nor philosophy,
To answer or reply
Against such heresy?

Wherefore by and by,
Now consequently,
I call to this reckoning
David, that royal king,
Whom Hieronimous,
That doctor glorious,
Doth both write and call
Poet of poets all,
And prophet principal.

This may not be remorded,
For it is well recorded
In his epistle *ad Paulinum,*
*Presbyterium divinum.*¹

¹Which is prefixed to the Vulgate. (See Hieronym, *Opera i. 1011*, ed. 1609.)

Where word for word ye may
Read what Jerome there doth say.

David, inquit, Simonides noster, Pindarus, et Alceus, Flaccus quoque, Catullus, atque Serenus, Christum lyra personat, et in decachordo psalterio ab inferis excitat resurgentem. Haec Hier.

THE ENGLISH

King David the prophet, of prophets principal,
Of poets chief poet, Saint Jerome doth write,
Resembled to Simonides, that poet lyrical
Among the Greeks most reluctant of light,
In that faculty which shinéd as Phœbus bright:
Like to Pindarus in glorious poetry,
Like unto Alcheus, he doth him magnify.

Flaccus nor Catullus with him may not compare,
Nor solemn Serenus, for all his harmony
In metrical muses, his harping we may spare;
For David, our poet, harped so melodiously
Of our Saviour Christ in his decachord psaltry,
That at his resurrection he harpéed out of hell
Old patriarchs and prophets in heaven with him to dwell.

Return we to our former process.

Then, if this noble king
Thus can harp and sing
With his harp of prophesy
And spiritual poetry,
As Saint Jerome saith,
To whom we must give faith,
Warbling with his strings
Of such theological things,
Why have ye then disdain
At poets, and complain
How poets do but feign?

Ye do much great outrage
 For to disparage
 And to discourage
 The fame matriculate
 Of poets laureate.

For if ye sadly¹ look,
 And wisely read the *Book*
*Of Good Advertisement,*²
 With me ye must consent
 And infallibly agree
 Of necessity,
 How there is a spiritual,
 And a mysterial,
 And a mystical
 Effect energial,
 As Greeks do it call,
 Of such an industry;
 And such a pregnancy,
 Of heavenly inspiration
 In laureate creation,
 Of poets commendation,
 That of divine miseration
 God maketh his habitation
 In poets which excells,
 And sojourns with them and dwells.

By whose inflammation
 Of spiritual instigation
 And divine inspiration
 We are kindled in such fashion
 With heat of the Holy Ghost
 (Which is God of mightes most),
 That he our pen doth lead,
 And maketh in us such speed
 That forthwith we must need
 With pen and ink proceed,

¹seriously.

²One of Skelton's lost poems.

Sometime for affection,
 Sometime for sad direction,
 Sometime for correction,
 Sometime under protection
 Of patient sufferance,
 With sober circumstance,
 Our mindes to advance
 To no man's annoyance.
 Therefore no grievance,
 I pray you, for to take
 In this that I do make
 Against these frenetics,
 Against these lunatics,
 Against these schismatics,
 Against these heretics,
 Now of late abjuréd,
 Most unhappily vred:
 For be ye well-assuréd
 That frenzy, nor jealously,
 Nor heresy will never die.

Dixi

*iniquis, Nolite inique agere; et delinquentibus, Nolite exaltare
cornu.*¹

*Tantum pro tertio.*²

*De raritate poetarum, deque gymnosophistarum, philosophorum,
theologorum, caeterorumque, eruditorum infinita numerositate,
Skel. L. epitoma.*³

*Sunt infiniti, sunt innumerique sophistae,
Sunt infiniti, sunt innumerique logistae,*

¹I said to the wicked, Be not stubborn; and to evil-doers, Rejoice not in your strength.

²So much for the third, or in the third place.

³About the rarity of poets, and the infinite abundance of gymnosophists, philosophers, theologians, and the rest of the learned, this is Skelton Laureate's epitome.

*Innumeri sunt philosophi, sunt theologique,
 Sunt infiniti doctores, suntque magistri
 Innumeri; sed sunt pauci rarique poetae.
 Hinc omne est rarum carum: reor ergo poetas
 Ante alias omnes divino flamine flatos.
 Sic Plato divinat, divinat sique Socrates;
 Sic magnus Macedo, sic Cæsar, maximus heros
 Romanus, celebres semper coluere poetas.¹*

*Thus endeth the Replication
 of Skelton Laureate.*

To My Lord Cardinal's Right Noble Grace, etc.

L'ENVOY

Go, little quaire,² apace,
 In most humble wise,
 Before his noble grace,
 That caused you to devise
 This little enterprise;
 And him most lowly pray,
 In his mind to comprise
 Those words his grace did say
 Of an amice gray.³

Je foy enterment⁴ en sa bone grace.

¹Infinite, innumerable are the sophists, infinite, innumerable are the logicians, innumerable are the philosophers and the theologians, infinite in number are doctors, and masters; but poets are few and rare. Hence all that is rare is dear: I think, then, that poets before all others are filled with the divine breath. So Plato thinks and so Socrates; so the great Macedonian, so Cæsar, the greatest of Roman heroes, always honoured the renowned poets.

²book.

³Does this mean that Skelton still had hopes of preferment from the Cardinal?

⁴i.e. *Je fie entièrement, etc.*



*A Right Delectable Treatise upon a Goodly
GARLAND OR CHAPLET OF LAUREL*

*By Maister Skelton, Poet Laureate, Studioously Devised at
Sheriff-Hutton Castle, in the Forest of Galtres, wherein
are comprised many and divers solacious and right pregnant
electuaries of singular pleasure, as more at large it doth
appear in the process following.*

*Eterno mansura die dum sidera fulgent,
Aequora dumque tument, haec laurea nostra virebit:
Hinc nostrum celebre et nomen referetur ad astra,
Undique Skeltonis memorabitur alter Adonis.¹*

Erecting my sight toward the zodiac,
The signs xii. for to behold afar,
When Mars retrogradant reverséd his back,
Lord of the year in his orbicular,
Put up his sword, for he could make no war,
And when Lucina plenarily did shine,
Scorpione ascending degrees twice nine;

In place alone then musing in my thought
How all thing passeth as doth the summer flower,
On every half² my reasons forth I sought,
How often fortune varieth in an hour,
Now clear weather, forthwith a stormy shower;
All thing compasséd, no perpetuity,
But now in wealth, now in adversity.

¹While the stars shine with eternal day, and while the seas swell,
these our laurels shall be green; our illustrious name shall be trans-
lated to the sky, and everywhere shall Skelton be renowned as
another Adonis.

²side.

So deeply drownéd I was in this dump,
 Encrampishéd¹ so sore was my conceit,
 That, me to rest, I leant me to a stump
 Of an oak, that sometime grew full straight,
 A mighty tree and of a noble height,
 Whose beauty blasted was with the boisterous wind,
 His leavés lost, the sap was from the rind.

Thus stood I in the frithy² forest of Galtress,
 Ensoakéd with silt of the miry moss,
 Where hartés bellowing, emboséd³ with distress,
 Ran on the range so long, that I suppose
 Few men can tell now where the hind-calf goes;
 Fair fall that forster⁴ that so well can bait his hound!
 But of my purpose now turn we to the ground.

Whiles I stood musing in this meditation,
 In slumbering I fell and half in a sleep;
 And whether it were of imagination,
 Or of humours superflue, that often will creep
 Into the brain by drinking over-deep,
 Or it proceeded of fatal persuasion,
 I cannot well tell you what was the occasion.

But suddenly at once, as I me adviséd,
 As one in a trance or in an ecstasy,
 I saw a pavilion wondrously disguiséd,
 Garnished fresh after my fantasy,
 Entachéd⁵ with pearl and stonés preciously,
 The ground engroséd and bet with bourné⁶ gold,
 That passing goodly it was to behold.

Within it, a princess excellent of port;
 But to recount her rich habiliment,

¹Encamped. ²woody. ³foaming at the mouth. ⁴forester.

⁵Inlaid. ⁶ground-work enriched... beaten... burnished.

And what estates to her did resort,
 Thereto am I full insufficient;
 A goddess immortal she did represent;
 As I heard say, Dame Pallas was her name;
 To whom supplied¹ the royal Queen of Fame.

The QUEEN OF FAME to DAME PALLAS

Princess most puissant, of high pre-eminence,
 Renownéd lady above the starry heaven,
 All other transcending, of every congruence
 Madame regent of the sciences seven,
 To whose estate all nobleness must leanen,²
 My supplication to you I erect,
 Whereof I beseech you to tender the effect.

Not unremembered it is unto your grace
 How you gave me a royal commandment
 That in my court Skelton should have a place,
 Because that his time he studiously hath spent
 In your service; and, to the accomplishment
 Of your requests, registered in his name
 With laureate triumph in the court of Fame.

But, good madam, the accustom and usage
 Of ancient poets, ye wot full well, hath been
 Themself to embusy with all their whole corage,³
 So that their workis might famously be seen,
 In figure whereof they wear the laurel green;
 But how it is, Skelton is wondrous slack,
 And, as we dare, we find in him great lack⁴:

For, ne were⁵ only he hath your promotion,
 Out of my bookis full soon I should him rase;

¹prayed. ²bow. ³heart. ⁴fault. ⁵were it not.

But sith he hath tasted of the sugared potion
 Of Helicon's well, refreshéd with your grace,
 And will not endeavour himself to purchace
 The favour of ladies with wordés elect,
 It is fitting that ye must him correct.

DAME PALLAS *to the QUEEN OF FAME*

The sum of your purpose, as we are advised,
 Is that our servant is somewhat too dull;

Wherein this answer for him we have compriséd,
 How rivers run not till the spring be full;

Better a dumb mouth than a brainless skull;

For if he gloriously polish his matter,

Then men will say how he doth but flatter;

And if so him fortune to write true and plain,

As sometime he must vices remord,¹

Then some will say he hath but little brain,

And how his words with reason will not accord;

Beware, for writing remaineth of record;

Displease not an hundred for one man's pleasure;

Who writeth wisely hath a great treasure.

Also, to furnish better his excuse,

Ovid was banished for such a skill,

And many more whom I could induce;

Juvenal was threat, pardé, for to kill²

For certain invectives, yet wrote he none ill,

Saving he rubbéd some upon the gall;

It was not for him to abide the triall.

In general words, I say not greatly nay,

A poet sometime may for his pleasure taunt,

Speaking in parables, how the fox, the gray,³

The gander, the goose, and the huge elephant,

Went with the peacock against the pheasant;

¹blame.

²i.e. for to be killed.

³badger.

The léopard came leaping, and said that he must,
With help of the ram, lay all in the dust.

Yet divers there be, industrious of reason,
Somewhat would gather in their conjecture
Of such an endarkéd chapter some season;
Howbeit, it were hard to construe this lecture;
Sophisticated craftily is many a conjecture¹;
Another man's mind difuse² is to expound;
Yet hard is to make³ but some fault be found.

The QUEEN OF FAME to DAME PALLAS

Madam, with favour of your benign sufferance,
Unto your grace then make I this motive⁴:
Whereto made ye me him to advance
Unto the room of laureate promotive?
Or whereto should he have that prerogative,
But if he had made some memorial
Whereby he might have a name immortal?

To pass the time in slothful idleness,
Of your royal palace it is not the guise,
But to do somewhat each man doth him 'dress:
For how should Cato else be calléd wise,
But that his bookis, which he did devise,
Record the same? or why is had in mind
Plato, but for that he left writing behind

For men to look on? Aristotle also,
• Of philosophers calléd the principal,
Old Diogenes, with many other mo,
Demosthenes, that orator royal,
That gave Æschines such a cordial,
That banished was he by his proposition,
Against whom he could make no contradiction?

¹composition.

²difficult.

³compose.

• ⁴motion.

DAME PALLAS *to the QUEEN OF FAME*

Soft, my good sister, and there a pause:
 And was Æschines rebukéd as ye say?
 Remember you well, point well that clause;
 Wherefore then raséd ye not away
 His name? or why is it, I you pray,
 That he to your court is going and coming,
 Sith he is slandered for default of conning¹?

The QUEEN OF FAME to DAME PALLAS

Madame, your apposelle² is well inferréd,
 And at your advantage quickly it is
 Touched, and hard for to be debarréd;
 Yet shall I answer your grace as in this,
 With your reformation, if I say amiss,
 For, but if your bounty did me assure,
 Mine argument else could not long endure.

As touching that Æschines is remembered,
 That he so should be, meseemeth it fitting,
 Albeit great part he hath surrendered
 Of his honour, whose dissuasive in writing
 To encourage Demosthenes was much exciting,
 In setting out freshly³ his crafty persuasion,
 From which Æschines had none evasion.

The cause why Demosthenes so famously is bruited
 Only proceeded for that he did outray
 Æschines, which was not shamefully confuted
 But of that famous orator, I say,
 Which passéd all other; wherefore I may
 Among my records suffer him naméd,
 For though he were vanquished, yet was he not shaméd.

¹skill.²question.³elegantly.

As Jeromy, in his preamble *Frater Ambrosius*,¹

From that I have said in no point doth vary,
Wherein he reporteth of the couragéous

Words that were much consolatory

By Æschines rehearsed to the great glory
Of Demosthenes, that was his utter foe:
Few shall ye find or none that will do so.

DAME PALLAS to the QUEEN OF FAME

A thank to have, ye have well deserved,

Your mind that can maintain so apparently;
But a great part yet ye have reserved

Of that must follow then consequently,
Or else ye demean you inordinately;

For if ye laud him whom honour hath opprest,
Then he that doth worst is as good as the best.

But whom that ye favour, I see well, hath a name,

Be he never so little of substance,
And whom ye love not ye will put to shame;

Ye counterweigh not evenly your balance;
As well folly as wisdom oft ye do advance:

For report riseth many diverse ways:
Some be much spoken of for making of frays;

Some have a name for theft and bribery;

Some be called crafty that can pick a purse;
Some men be made of for their mockery;

Some careful cuckolds, some have their wivēs curse;
Some famous wittols,² and they be much worse;

Some litherons,³ some losells,⁴ some naughty packis⁵;
Some facers, some bracers, some make great crackis⁶;

¹The Epistle of Jerome to Paulinus, prefixed to the Vulgate, begins with these words.

²tame cuckolds. ³Synonymous names for scoundrels.

⁴boasters . . . vaunters . . . boasts.

Some drunken dastards with their dry soulēs;
 Some sluggish slovens, that sleep day and night;
 Riot and Revel be in your court rollēs;
 Maintenance and Mischief, these be men of might;
 Extortion is counted with you for a knight;
 These people by me have none assignement,
 Yet they ride and run from Carlisle to Kent.

But little or nothing ye shall hear tell
 Of them that have virtue by reason of conning,
 Which sovereignly in honour should excell;
 Men of such matters make but a mumming,¹
 For wisdom and sadness² be set out a-sunning;
 And such of my servantēs as I have promoted,
 One fault or other in them shall be noted:

Either they will say he is too wise,
 Or else he can nought but when he is at school;
 Prove his wit, saith he, at cards or dice,
 And ye shall well find he is a very fool;
 Twish, set him a chair, or reach him a stool,
 To sit him upon, and read Jack-a-Thrumēs bible,
 For truly it were pity that he sat idle!

The QUEEN OF FAME to DAME PALLAS

To make repugnance³ against that ye have said
 Of very duty it may not well accord,
 But your benign sufferance for my discharge I laid,
 For that I would not with you fall at dischord;
 But yet I beseech your grace that good record
 May be brought forth, such as can be found,
 With laureate triumph why Skelton should be crown'd;

For else it were too great a derogation
 Unto your palace, our noble court of Fame,

¹keep mūn, silent. ²seriousness. ³contradiction.

That any man under supportation
 Without deserving should have the best game:
 If he to the ample increase of his name
 Can lay any workis that he hath compiléd,
 I am content that he be not exiléd

From the laureate senate by force of proscription;
 Or else, ye know well, I can do no less
 But I must banish him from my jurisdiction,
 As he hath acquainted him with idleness;
 But if that he purpose to make a redress,
 What he hath done, let it be brought to sight:
 Grant my petition, I askē you but right.

DAME PALLAS *to the Queen of Fame*

To your request we be well condescended:
 Call forth, let see where is your clarionar,¹
 To blow a blast with his long breath extended;
 Æolus, your trumpeter, that known is so far,
 That bararag bloweth in every martial war,
 Let him blow now, that we may take a view
 What poetis we have at our retinue;

To see if Skelton will put himself in preas,²
 Among the thickest of all the whole rout.
 Make noise enough, for clatterers love no peace!
 Let see, my sister, now speed you, go about;
 Anon, I say, this trumpeter were found out,
 And for no man hardly let him spare
 To blow bararag till both his eyen stare.

SKELTON POETA

Forthwith there rose among the throng
 A wonderful noise, and on every side ,

¹trumpeter.

²in the company,

They presséd in fast; some thought they were too long;
 Some were too hasty, and would no man bide;
 Some whisperéd, some rownéd,¹ some spake, and some
 cried,

With heaving and shouting, have in and have out;
 Some ran the next² way, some ran about.

There was sueing to the Queen of Fame,
 He plucked him back, and he went afore;
 Nay, hold thy tongue, quod another, let me have the name!
 Make room, said another, ye press all too sore!
 Some said, Hold thy peace, thou gettest here no more!
 'A thousand thousand I saw on a plump³;
 With that I heard the noise of a trump,

That long time blew a full terrible blast,
 Like to the boreal windés when they blow,
 That towers and townés and trees down cast,
 Drove cloudés together like driftés of snow;
 The dreadful din drove all the rout on a row;
 Some trembléd, some gирнéd,⁴ some gaspéd, some gazéd,
 As people half peevious,⁵ or men that were mazéd!

Anon all was whist,⁶ as it were for the nonce,
 And each man stood gazing and staring upon other!
 With that there came in wondrously at once
 A murmur of minstrels, that such another
 Had I never seen, some softer, some louder;
 Orpheus, the Thracian, harped melodiously
 With Amphion, and other Muses of Arcady:

Whose heavenly harmony was so passing sure,
 So truely proportionéd, and so well did agree,
 So duly entunéd with every measúre,
 That in the forest was none so great a tree
 But that he danced for joy of that glee;

¹muttered.

²nearest.

³mass.

⁴grinned.

—

⁵silly.

⁶still.

The huge mighty oaks themself did advance,
And leap from hillés to learn for to dance.

In so much the stump, whereto I me leant,
Start all at once an hundredth foot back!
With that I sprang up toward the tent
Of noble Dame Pallas, whereof I spake;
Where I saw come after, I wot, full little lack
Of a thousand poetés assembled together!
But Phœbus was foremost of all that came thither;

Of laurel leaves a coronal on his head,
With hairs encrispéd yellow as the gold,
Lamenting Daphne, whom with the dart of lead,
Cupid hath striken so that she ne wold
Consent to Phœbus to have his heart in hold;
But, for to preserve her maidenhood clean,
Transforméd was she into the laurel green.

Mingled with mourning the most part of his muse,
O thoughtful heart, was evermore his song!
Daphne, my darling, why do you me refuse?
Yet look on me, that lovéd you so long,
Yet have compassion upon my painés strong!
He sang also how, the tree as he did take
Between his arms, he felt her body quake.²

Then he assurded³ into this exclamation
Unto Diana, the goddess immortal:
O merciless madam, hard is your constellation,
So close to keep your cloister virginall,
Enharded adamant the cement of your wall!
Alas, what ails you to be so overthwart,
To banish pity out of a maiden's heart?

¹From Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, i. 471.

²Ovid, *Men* i. 553.

³broke forth.

Why have the gods shewéd me this cruelty,
 Sith I contrived first principals medicinable?
 I help all other of their infirmity,
 But now to help myself I am not able;
 That profiteth all other is nothing profitable
 Unto me; alas, that herb nor gress
 The fervent axes¹ of love cannot repress!

O fatal fortune! what have I offended?
 Odious disdain, why array'st thou me in this fashion?
 But sith I have lost now that I intended,
 And may not attain it by no meditation,
 Yet, in remembrance of Daphne's transformation,
 All famous poets ensuing after me
 Shall wear a garland of this laurel tree.

This said, a great number followéd by and by
 Of poetis laureat² of many diverse nations;
 Part of their names I think to specify:
 First, old Quintilian with his Declamations;
 Theocritus with his bucolical relations;
 Hesiodus, the economicar,
 And Homerus, the fresh historiar;

Prince of eloquence, Tullius Cicero,
 With Salusty against Lucius Cateline,
 That wrote the history of Iugurta also;
 Ovid, enshrined with the Muses nine;
 But blessed Bacchus, the pleasant god of wine,
 Of clusters engroséd³ with his ruddy floatés⁴
 These orators and poets refreshéd their throatés!

¹fits.

²Formerly poet laureat merely meant a person who had taken a degree in grammar, including rhetoric and versification. But the word poet was applied to a writer of prose as well as verse.

³swollen.

⁴drops.

Lucan, with Stacius in Achilliedos;
 Percius pressed forth with his problems diffuse;
 Virgil the Mantuan, with his *Aenidos*;
 Juvenal satiric, that men maketh to muse;
 But blessed Bacchus, the pleasant god of wine,
 Of clusters engroséd with his ruddy floatés
 These orators and poets refreshéd their throatés!

There Titus Livius himself did advance
 With decadés historious, which that he mingleth
 With matters that amount the Romans in substance;
 Ennius that wrote of martial war at length;
 But Blessed Bacchus, the potential god of strength,
 Of clusters engroséd with his ruddy floatés
 These orators and poets refreshéd their throatés!

Aulus Gelius, that noble historiar;
 Horace also with his new poetry¹;
 Maister Terence, that famous comicar,
 With Plautus, that wrote full many a comedy;
 But blessed Bacchus was in their company,
 Of clusters engroséd with his ruddy floatés
 These orators and poets refreshéd their throatés!

Senec full soberly with his tragedies;
 Boyce,² recomforted with his philosophy;
 And Maximian, with his mad ditties,³
 How doting age would jape with young folly;
 But blessed Bacchus most reverent and holy,
 Of clusters engroséd with his ruddy floatés
 These orators and poets refreshéd their throatés!

There came John Bochas with his volumes great⁴;
 Quintus Cursius, full craftily⁵ that wrate

¹i.e. Horace's *Art of Poetry*.

²Boëthius.

³Elegiarum liber of Maximianus.

⁴Boccaccio's *De Genealogia*, and *De Casibus Virorum et Foeminarum Illustrium*, rather than the *Decamerone*.

⁵skilfully.

Of Alexander; and Macrobius that did treat
 Of Scipion's dream what was the true probate;
 But blessed Bacchus that never man forgate,
 Of clusters engroséd with his ruddy floatés
 These orators and poets refreshéd their throatés!

Poggio also, that famous Florentine,
 Mustered there among them with many a mad tale¹;
 With a friar of France men call Sir Gaguine,
 That frownéd on me full angerly and pale;
 But blessed Bacchus, that bote² is of all bale,
 Of clusters engroséd with his ruddy floatés
 These orators and poets refreshéd their throatés!

Plutarch and Petrarch, two famous clerkis;
 Lucilius and Valerius Maximus by name;
 With Vicentius *in Speculo*,³ that wrote noble workis;
 Propertius and Pisander, poets of noble fame;
 But blessed Bacchus, that mastris⁴ oft doth frame,
 Of clusters engroséd with his ruddy floatés
 These notable poetis refreshéd their throatés!

And as I thus sadly among them aviséd,⁵
 I saw Gower, that first garnished our English rude,
 And Maister Chaucer, that nobly enterprised
 How that our English might freshly be enewéd⁶;
 The monk of Bury then after them ensuéd,
 Dan' John Lydgate: these English poetis three,
 As I imaginéd, repairéd unto me,

Together in arms, as brethren embracéd;
 Their apparel far passing beyond that I can tell;

¹ Poggio's *Facetiae*, then very popular. ² remedy.

³ The *Speculum Majus* (1473) of Vicentius Bellovacensis.

⁴ strifes? ⁵earnestly . . . looked. ⁶polished.

⁷i.e. Dominus.

With diamonds and rubies their tabards were traséd,
 None so rich stones in Turkey to sell;
 They wanted nothing but the laurell¹;
 And of their bounty they made me goodly cheer,
 In manner and form as ye shall after hear.

MAISTER GOWER *to* SKELTON

Brother Skelton, your endeavourment
 So have ye done, that meritoriously
 Ye have deserved to have an employment
 In our college above the starry sky,
 Because that ye increase and amplify
 The bruited² Britons of Brutus Albion,
 That well-nigh was lost when that we were gone.

POETA SKELTON *to* MAISTER GOWER

Maister Gower, I have nothing deserved
 To have so laudable a commendation:
 To you three this honour shall be reserved,
 Erecting unto your wise examination
 How all that I do is under reformation,
 For only the substance of that I intend
 Is glad to please, and loth to offend.

MAISTER CHAUCER *to* SKELTON

Counterweighing your busy dilligence
 Of that we began in the supplement,
 Enforcéd are we you to recompence,
 Of all our whole college by the agreement,
 That we shall bring you personally present
 Of noble Fame before the Queenés grace,
 In whose court apointed is your place.

¹They were not poets laureate — like Skelton. ²famed.

POETA SKELTON *answereth*

O noble Chaucer, whose polished eloquence
 Our English rude so freshly hath set out,
 That bound are we with all due reverence,
 With all our strength that we can bring about,
 To owe to you our service, and more if we moght!
 But what should I say? Ye wot what I intend,
 Which glad am to please, and loth to offend.

MAISTER LYDGATE *to SKELTON*

So am I prevented of my brethren twain
 In rendering to you thankés meritory,
 That well-nigh nothing there doth remain
 Wherewith to give you my regraciatory,
 But that I 'point you to be protonotary
 Of Fame's court, by all our whole assent
 Advancéd by Pallas to laurel preferment.

POETA SKELTON *answereth*

So have ye me far passing my meritis extolléd,
 Maister Lygate, of your accustomable
 Bounty, and so gloriously ye have enrolled
 My name, I know well, beyond that I am able;
 That but if my workés thereto be agreeable,
 I am else rebukéd of that I intend,
 Which glad am to please, and loth to offend.

So finally, when they had shewéd their devise,
 Under the form as I said tofore,
 I made it strange, and drew back once or twice,
 And ever they pressed on me more and more,
 Till at the last they forcéd me so sore,
 That with them I went where they would me bring,
 Unto the pavilion where Pallas was sitting.

Dame Pallas commanded that they should me convey
In the rich palace of the Queen of Fame;
There shall he hear what she will to him say
When he is called to answer to his name.

A cry anon forthwith she made proclaim,
All orators and poetis should thither go before,
With all the press that there was less and more.

Forthwith, I say, thus wandering in my thought,
How it was, or else within what hours,
I cannot tell you, but that I was brought
Into a palace with turrettis and towers,
Engalleried goodly with hallis and bowers,
So curiously, so craftily, so cunningly wrought
That all the world, I trow, an it were sought,

Such another there could no man find;
Whereof partly I purpose to expound,
Whiles it remaineth fresh in my mind.
With turquoise and chrysolite enpavéd was the ground;
Of beryl embosséd were the pillars round;
Of elephantés teeth were the palace gates,
Enlozengéd with many goodly plates

Of gold, entached¹ with many a precious stone;
An hundred stepis mounting to the hall,
One of jasper, another of whalés-bone;
Of diamondis pointed was the rocky wall;
The carpetis within and tapettis of pall²;
The chambers hangéd with clothés of Arrase;
Envaulted with rubies the vault was of this place.

Thus passéd we forth walking unto the pretory
Where the postes were embullioned with sapphires Indy
blue,

¹inlaid.

²fine cloths.

Englazéd glittering with many a clear story;
 Jacinths and smaragdis out of the florth¹ they grew
 Unto this place all poetis there did sue,
 Wherein was set of Fame the noble Queen,
 All other transcending, most richly beseen,

Under a glorious cloth of estate,
 Fret all with orient pearlés of Garnate,
 Encrowned as empress of all this worldly fate,
 So royally, so richly, so passing ornate,
 It was exceeding beyond the common rate.
 This house envirown was a mile about;
 If xii. were let in, xii. hundred stood without.

Then to this lady and sovereign of this palace
 Of pursuivants² there presséd in with many a diverse tale;
 Some were of Poyle,³ and some were of Thrace,
 Of Limerick, of Lorain, of Spain, of Portingale,
 From Naples, from Novern, and from Rouncevale,
 Some from Flanders, some from the sea-coast,
 Some from the main-land, some from the French host:

With, How doth the north? What tidings in the south?
 The west is windy, the east is meetly weel!
 It is hard to tell of every mannés mouth;
 A slippery hold the tail is of an eel,
 And he halteth often that hath a kiby⁴ heel.
 Some shewéd his safe-conduct, some shewéd his charter,
 Some lookéd full smoothly, and had a false quarter;

With, sir, I pray you, a little time stand back,
 And let me come in to deliver my letter!
 Another told how shippés went to wrack;
 There were many wordés smaller and greater,
 With, I as good as thou! I'faith and no better!

¹wall.²followers.³Apulia.⁴blistered.

Some came to tell truth, some came to lie,
Some came to flatter, and some came to spy.

There were, I say, of all manner of sorts,
 Of Dartmouth, of Plymouth, of Portsmouth also;
The burgesses and the bailiffs of the Cinque Ports,
 With, Now let me come! and, Now let me go!
 And all time wandered I thus to and fro,
Till at the last these noble poetis three
Unto me said, Lo, sir, now ye may see

Of this high court the daily business!
 From you must we, but not long to tarry.
Lo, hither cometh a goodly mistress,
 Occupation, Famēs registrary,
 Which shall be to you a sovereign accessory,
With singular pleasures to drive away the time,
And we shall see you again ere it be prime¹!

When they were passed and went forth on their way,
 This gentlewoman, that calléd was by name
Occupation, in right goodly array,
 Came toward me, and smiléd half in game;
 I saw her smile, and I then did the same.
With that on me she cast her goodly look;
Under her arm, methought, she had a book.

OCCUPATION *to* SKELTON

Like as the lark, upon the summer's day,
 When Titan radiant burnisheth his beamis bright,
Mounteth on high with her melodious lay,
 Of the sunshine engladed with the light,
 So am I surpriséd with pleasure and delight
To see this hour now, that I may say
How ye are welcome to this court of array! •

¹Properly, the time between 6 and 9 a.m. •

Of your acquaintance I was in times past,
 Of studious doctrine when at the port salu¹
 Ye first arrived, when broken was your mast
 Of worldly trust; then did I you rescue;
 Your storm-driven ship I repairéd new,
 So well entackled, what wind that ever blow,
 No stormy tempest your barge shall overthrow!

Welcome to me as heartily as heart can think,
 Welcome to me with all my whole desire!
 And for my sake spare neither pen nor ink;
 Be well assured I shall requite your hire,
 Your name recounting beyond the land of Tyre,
 From Sidony to the mount Olympian,
 From Babel's Tower to the hillès Caspian.

SKELTON POETA *answereth*

I thanked her much of her most noble offer,
 Affiancing her mine whole assuráne,
 For her pleasure to make a large proffer,
 Imprinting her wordés in my remembrance,
 To owe her my service with true perseverance.
 Come on with me, she said, let us not stand!
 And with that word she took me by the hand.

So passéd we forth into the foresaid place,
 With such communication as came to our mind.
 And then she said, Whiles we have time and space
 To walk where we list, let us somewhat find
 To pass the time with, but let us waste no wind,
 For idle janglers have but little brain:
 Words be swords, and hard to call again!

Into a field she brought me wide and large,
 Enwalléd about with the stony flint,

¹safe port, harbour.

Strongly embattled, much costious of charge:
 To walk on this wall she bade I should not stint.
 Go softly, she said, the stones be full glint!
 She went before, and bade me take good hold:
 I saw a thousand gates new and old.

Then questioned I her what those gates meant;
 Whereto she answeréd, and briefly me told,
 How from the east unto the occident,
 And from the south unto the north so cold,
 These gates, she said, which that ye behold,
 Be issues and ports from all manner of nations;
 And seriously she shewéd me their denominations.

They had writing, some Greek, some Hebrew,
 Some Roman letters, as I understood;
 Some were old written, some were written new,
 Some characters of Chaldy, some French was full good;
 But one gate specially, whereas I stood,
 Had graven in it of chalcedony a capital A.
 What gate call ye this? And she said, Anglia.

The building thereof was passing commendable;
 Whereon stood a leopard, crownéd with gold and stones,
 Terrible of countenance and passing formidable,
 As quickly touchéd ² as it were flesh and bones,
 As ghastly that glares, and grimly that groans,
 As fiercely frowning as he had been fighting,
 And with his former foot he shook forth this writing.

*Formidanda nimis Jovis ultima fulmina tollis:
 Ungibus ire parat loca singula livida curvis
 Quam modo per Phœbus nummos raptura Celano;
 Arma, lues, luctus, fel, vis, fraus, barbara tellus;
 Mille modis erras odium tibi querere Martis:
 Spreto spineto cedant saliunca roseto.*³

¹slippery. ²Executed as much to the life.

³I cannot make anything of this.

Then I me leant, and looked over the wall:

Innumerable people pressed to every gate.

Shut were the gates; they might well knock and call,

And turn home again, for they came all too late.

I her demanded of them and their estate.¹

Forsooth, quod she, they be haskardis and rébawdis,²

Dicers, carders, tumblers with gambawdis.³

Furtherers of love,⁴ with bawdry aquainted,

Brainless blinkardis⁵ that blow at the coal,

False forgers of money, for coinage attainted,

Pope-holy hypocrites, as they were gold and whole,⁶

Pole-hatchetis, that prate will at every ale-pole,⁷

Riot, reveller, railer, bribery, theft,

With other conditions that well might be left.

Some feign themselves fools, and would be calléd wise,

Some meddling spies, by craft to grope thy mind,

Some disdainous dawcocks⁸ that all men despise,

False flatterers that fawn thee, and curs of kind

That speak fair before thee and shrewdly behînd;

Hither they come crowding to get them a name,

But hailéd they be homeward with sorrow and shame!

With that I heard guns rush out at once,

Bowns, bowns, bowns!⁹ that all they out cried;

It made some limp-leggéd and bruiséd their bones;

Some were made peevish,¹⁰ porishly pink-eyed,

That ever more after by it they were espied;

And one was there, I wondered of his hap,

For a gun-stone, I say, had all to-jagged his cap:

Ragged and daggéd, and cunningly cut,

The blast of the brimstone blew away his brain;

¹condition. ²rascals . . . ribalds. ³gambols. ⁴pimps.

⁵sluggards. ⁶Cronies that gossip round the ale-house sign.

⁷stuck-up ignoramuses. ⁸i.e. the reports of the guns. ⁹silly.

Mazéd as a March-hare, he ran like a scut¹!

And, sir, among all methought I saw twain,

The one was a tumbler, that afterwards again
Of a dicer, a devil way, grew a gentleman,
Pierce Prater the second, that quarrelis began;

With a pellet of peeishness they had such a stroke,

That all the days of their life shall stick by their ribs!

Foo, foisty bawdias! some smelléd of the smoke!

I saw divers that were carried away thence in cribs,

Dazing after dotterels, like drunkards that dribs.²

These titivels with tampons were touchéd and tapped³;
Much mischief, I hight you, among them there happed.

Sometime, as it seemeth, when the moon-light

By means of a grisily endarkéd cloud

Suddenly is eclipséd in the winter night,

In like manner of wise a mist did us shrowd.

But well may ye think I was nothing proud
Of that adventure, which made me sore aghast.
In darkness thus dwelt we, till at the last

The clouds began to clear, the mist rarified;

In an herber⁴ I saw, brought where I was,

There birds on the briar sang on every side;

With alleys ensanded⁵ about in compass,

The banks enturféd with singular solas,
Enrailéd with rosers,⁶ and vinés engrapéd;
It was a new comfort of sorrowis escapéd.

In the midst of a conduit, that curiously was cast,

With pipés of gold, engushing out streams;

Of crystal the clearness these waters far past,

Enswimming with roaches, barbellis, and breams,

Whose scales ensilvered against the sun-beams

¹hare.

²dribbles.

³I suppose: These stupid fellows had stoppers put in their mouths.

⁴enclosed garden.

⁵sanded walks.

⁶rose-bushes.

Englistered, that joyous it was to behold.
Then furthermore about me my sight I revol'd,¹

Where I saw growing a goodly laurel tree,
Enverduré with leavés continually green;
Above in the top a bird of Araby
Men call a phoenix, her wings between
She beat up a fire with the sparks full keen;
With branches and boughés of the sweet olive,
Whose fragrant flower was chief preservative

Against all infections with rancour inflaméd,
Against all baratous bruises of old,
It passéd all balmés that ever were naméd,
Or gums of Araby so dearly that be sold.

There blew in that garden a soft pipling cold
Enbreathing of Zephyrus with his pleasant wind;
All fruits and flowers grew there in their kind.

Dryads there dancéd upon that goodly soil,
With the Nine Muses, Pierides by name;
Phyllis and Testalis, their tresses with oil
Were newly enbibéd²; and round about the same
Green tree of laurel much solacious³ game
They made, with chapelets and garlands green;
And foremost of all Dame Flora, the queen

Of summer, so formally she footed the dance;
There Cyntheus sat twinkling upon his harp-strings;
And Iopas⁴ his instrument did advance,⁵
The poemés and stories, ancient inbrings⁶
Of Atlas astrology, and many noble things,
Of wandering of the moon, the course of the sun,
Of men and of beasts, and whereof they begun,

¹revolved, turned. ²anointed. ³pleasant.

⁴the Carthaginian bard.

⁵Here, and for the next two stanzas, cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, i. 740.

⁶doctrines(?)

What thing occasionéd the showers of rain,
 Of fire elementar in his supreme sphere,
 And of that pole arctic which doth remain
 Behind the tail of Ursa so clear;
 Of Pliades he preached with their drowsy chere,¹
 Emoisturéd with misling and aye dropping eye,
 And where the two Triones² a man should espy,

And of the winter days that hie them so fast,
 And of the winter nights that tarry so long,
 And of the summer days so long that do last,
 And of their short nights; he brought in his song
 How wrong was no right, and right was no wrong:
 There was countering of carols in metre and verse
 So many, that long it were to rehearse.

OCCUPATION *to SKELTON*

How say ye? is this after your appetite?
 May this content you and your merry mind?
 Here dwelleth pleasure,³ with lust³ and delight³;
 Continual comfort here ye may find,
 Of wealth and solace no thing left behind;
 All thing convenáble⁴ here is contrivéd,
 Wherewith your spirités may be revivéd.

POETA SKELTON *answerteth*

Questionless no doubt of that ye say;
 Jupiter himself this life might endure;
 This joy exceedeth all worldly sport and play;
 Paradise this place is of singular pleasure:
 O well were him that hereof might be sure,
 And here to inhabit and aye for to dwell!
 But, goodly mistress, one thing ye me tell.

¹aspect, looks. ²i.e. Ursa major and minor, the Wain.

³All synonymous words, of course. ⁴meet, fit.

OCCUPATION *to SKELTON*

Of your demand shew me the content,
 What it is, and where upon it stands;
 And if there be in it any thing meant,
 Whereof the answer resteth in my hands,
 It shall be loosed full soon out of the bands
 Of scrupulous doubt; wherefore your mind discharge,
 And of your will the plainness shew at large.

POETA SKELTON *answereth*

I thank you, goodly mistress, to me most benign,
 That of your bounty so well have me assuréd;
 But my request is not so great a thing
 That I ne force what though it be discuréd¹;
 I am not wounded but that I may be curéd;
 I am not laden of liderness with lumps,²
 As dazéd dotardis that dream in their dumps.

OCCUPATION *to SKELTON*

Now what ye mean, I trow I conject;
 God give you good year, ye make me to smile!
 Now, by your faith, is not this the effect
 Of your question ye make all this while,
 To understand who dwelleth in yond pile,
 And what blunderer is yonder that played diddle diddle?
 He findeth false measures out of his fond fiddle.

Interpolata, que industriosum postulat interpretem, satira in vatis adversarium.³

¹That I do not care though it be discovered.

²i.e. I am not laden with lumps of sluggishness.

³An interpolated satire against the poet's adversary, which demands an industrious interpreter. (It certainly does! I leave the reader to make what he can of it.)

*Tressis agasonis species prior, altera Davi:
 Aucupium culicis, limis dum torquet ocellum,
 Concipit, aligeras rapit, appetit, aspice, muscas!
 Maia quaeque foveat, foveat aut que Jupiter, aut quae
 Frigida Saturnus, Sol, Mars, Venus, algida Luna,
 Si tibi contingat verbo aut committere scripto,
 Quam sibi mox tacita audant praecordia culpa!
 Hinc ruit in flamas, stimulans hunc urget et illum,
 Invocat ad rixas, vanos tamen excitar ignes,
 Labra movens tacitus, rumpantur ut illa Codro.¹*

17. 4. 7. 2. 17. 5. 18.

18. 19. 1. 19. 8. 5. 12.²

His name for to know if that ye list,
 Envious Rancour truely he hight:
 Beware of him, I warn you; for an ye wist
 How dangerous it were to stand in his light,
 Ye would not deal with him, though that ye might!
 For by his devilish drift and graceless provision
 An whole realm he is able to set at devision:

¹The first kind is a twopenny halfpenny groom [or lackey], the second a Davus [i.e. a slave]: He undertakes the watching of the gnat, while he turns his eye aslant, and, look, he seizes, snatches at, the winged flies! Whatever Maia cherishes, or Jupiter, or cold Saturn, Sun, Mars, Venus, and the chill Moon, if it happens to you to commit it to word or writing, how soon the heart sweats to itself with silent guilt! Hence he rushes into flames, stirs up this one and that, invokes to strife, yet kindles the ineffectual fires, moving the lips in silence – let Codrus [a poet hostile to Virgil] burst his lungs!

²Mr. Richard Hughes, in his edition of *Poems* by John Skelton (Heinemann, 1924), has interpreted these figures as ROGERUS STATHAM, thus giving a clue to the personality of “the poet’s adversary.” (See lines to Mistress Gertrude Statham further on.) Yet the “groom” may refer to Stephen Hawes, who was Groom of the Chamber under Henry VII, and who may also be referred to here as “Codrus,” as a poet who harboured “enviouds rancour” for Skelton.

For when he speaketh fairest, then thinketh he most ill;
 Full gloriously can he glose, thy mind for to feel;
 He will set men a-fighting, and sit himself still,
 And smirk, like a smithy cur, at sparkēs of steel;
 He can never leave work whiles it is weel;
 To tell all his touches it were too great wonder,
 The devil of hell and he be seldom assunder!

Thus talking we went in at a postern gate;
 Turning on the right hand, by a winding stair,
 She brought me to a goodly chamber of estate,
 Where the noble Countess of Surrey¹ in a chair
 Sat honourably, to whom did repair
 Of ladies a bevy with all due reverence:
 Sit down, fair ladies, and do your diligence!

Come forth, gentlewomen, I pray you! she said,
 I have contrivēd for you a goodly wark!
 And who can work best now shall be assayed.
 A coronal of laurel with verdures light and dark
 I have devisēd for Skelton, my clerk;
 For to his service I have such regard
 That of our bounty we will him reward.

For of all ladies he hath the library,
 Their names recounting in the court of Fame;
 Of all gentlewomen he hath the scrutiny,
 In Fame's court reporting the same;
 For yet of women he never said shame,
 But if they were counterfeits, that women them call,
 That list of their lewdness² with him for to brawl.

With that the tappetis and carpetis were laid,
 Whereon these ladies softly might rest,

¹Wife of Lord Thomas Howard and mother of the poet, Henry Howard, to whom Skelton was tutor.

²impudence.

The sampler to sew on, the laces to embraid;
 To weave in the stole some were full prest,¹
 With sleys,² with tavellis,³ with hiddles⁴ well drest;
 The frame was brought forth with his weaving pin:
 God give them good speed their work to begin!

Some to embroider put them in prease,⁵
 Well guiding their glowton⁶ to keep straight their silk,
 Some pirling⁷ of gold their work to increase
 With fingers small, and handes white as milk;
 With, Reach me the skein of tuly⁸ silk!
 And, Wind me that bottom of such an hue,
 Green, red, tawny, white, black, purple, and blue.

Of broken works wrought many a goodly thing,
 In casting, in turning, in flourishing of flowers,
 With burrés rough and bottons⁹ surfeling,¹⁰
 In needle-work raising birdés in bowers,
 With virtue enbusied all timés and hours;
 And truly of their bounty thus were they bent
 To work me this chaplet by good advisement.

OCCUPATION *to* SKELTON

Behold and see in your advertisement
 How these ladies and gentlewomen all
 For your pleasure do their endeavourment,
 And for your sake how fast to work they fall:
 To your remembrance wherefore ye must call
 In goodly wordés pleasantly compriséd,
 That for them some goodly conceit be deviséd,

¹ready. ²weaver's reeds. ³silk-weaving instruments.

⁴The small cords through which the warp is passed in a loom, after going through the reed.

⁵applied themselves. ⁶needle. ⁷winding.

⁸deep red. ⁹buds. ¹⁰embroidering.

With proper captations¹ of benevolence,
 Ornately polished after your faculty,
 Sith ye must needs aforce² it by pretence
 Of your profession unto humanity,³
 Commencing your process after their degree,
 To each of them rendering thanks commendable,
 With sentence fructuous and termes covenable.⁴

POETA SKELTON

Advancing myself some thankē to deserve,
 I me determinēd for to sharp my pen,
 Devoutly arreting⁵ my prayer to Minerve,
 She to vouchsafe me to inform and ken;
 To Mercury also heartily prayed I then,
 Me to support, to help, and to assist,
 To guide and to govern my dreadful trembling fist.

As a mariner that amazēd is in a stormy rage,
 Hardly bested and driven is to hope
 Of that the tempestuous wind will assuage,
 In trust whereof comfort his heart doth grope,
 From the ancor he cutteth the cable-rope,
 Commiteth all to God, and letteth his ship ride,
 So I beseech Jesu now to be my guide!

To the right noble COUNTESS OF SURREY

After all duly ordered obeisance,
 In humble wise as lowly as I may,
 Unto you, madam, I make reconusance⁶!
 My life enduring I shall write and say,
 Recount, report, rehearse without delay
 The passing bounty of your noble estate,
 Of honour and worship which hath the former date.

¹courſhip. ²attempt. ³literature. ⁴meet.
 ⁵raising. ⁶acknowledgement.

Like to Argia by just resemblance,
 The noble wife of Polynices king;
 Prudent Rebecca, of whom remembrance
 The Bible maketh; with whose chaste living
 Your noble demeanour is counterweighing,
 Whose passing bounty, and right noble estate,
 Of honour and worship it hath the former date.

The noble Pamphila, queen of the Greekēs land,
 Habiliments royal found out industriously;
 Thamer¹ also wrought with her goodly hand
 Many devices passing curiously;
 Whom ye represent and exemplify,
 Whose passing bounty, and right noble estate,
 Of honour and worship it hath the former date.

As Dame Thamarys, which took the king of Perce,
 Cyrus by name, as writeth the story;
 Dame Agrippina also I may rehearse
 Of gentle corage and perfect memory;
 So shall your name endure perpetually,
 Whose passing bounty, and right noble estate,
 Of honour and worship it hath the former date.

To my lady ELIZABETH HOWARD

To be your remembrancer, madam, I am bound,
 Like to Irene, maidenly of port,
 Of virtue and conning the well and perfect ground;
 Whom Dame Nature, as well I may report,
 Hath freshly embeautied with many a goodly sort
 Of womanly features, whose flourishing tender age
 Is lusty to look on, pleasant, demure, and sage.

¹Timarete, daughter to Mycon, the painter. (See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*)

Good Criseyde, fairer than Polexene,
 For to enliven Pandarus' appetite;
 Troilus, I trow, if that he had you seen,
 In you he would have set his whole delight:
 Of all your beauty I suffice not to write!
 But, as I said, your flourishing tender age
 Is lusty to look on, pleasant, demure, and sage.

To my lady MIRREL HOWARD

My little lady I may not leave behind,
 But do her service needs now I must;
 Benign, courteous, of gentle heart and mind,
 Whom Fortune and Fate plainly have dicust¹
 Long to enjoy pleasure, delight, and lust:
 The embossed blossoms of roses red of hue,
 With lillies white your beauty doth renew.

Compare you I may to Cydippe, the maid,
 That of Acontius, when she found the bil²:
 In her bosom, lord, how she was afraid!
 The ruddy shame-facedness in her visage fill,
 Which manner of abashment became her not ill!
 Right so, madam, the roses red of hue
 With lillies white your beauty doth renew.

To my lady ANNE DAKERS of the South

Zeuxis that empictured fair Elene the queen,
 You to devise his craft were to seek;
 And if Apelles your countenance had seen,
 Of portraiture which was the famous Greek,
 He could not devise the least point of your cheek!
 Princess of youth, and flower of goodly port,
 Virtue, conning, solace, pleasure, comfort.

¹determined.

²billet-doux.

Paregal¹ in honour unto Penelope,
 That for her truth is in remembrance had;
 Fair Dijanira surmounting in beauty;
 Demure Diana womanly and sad,
 Whose lusty looks make heavy heartis glad!
 Princess of youth, and flower of goodly port,
 Virtue, conning, solace, pleasure, comfort.

To MISTRESS MARGERY WENTWORTH

With margerain² gentle,
 The flower of goodlihead,³
 Embroidered the mantle
 Is of your maidenhead.
 Plainly I cannot glose;
 Ye be, as I devine,
 The pretty primrose,
 The goodly columbine.
 With margerain gentle,
 The flower of goodlihead,
 Embroidered the mantle
 Is of your maidenhead.
 Benign, courteous, and meek,
 With wordēs well devised;
 In you, who list to seek,
 Be virtues well comprised.
 With margerain gentle,
 The flower of goodlihead,
 Embroidered the mantle
 Is of your maidenhead.

To MISTRESS MARGARET TYLNEY

I you assure,
 Full well I know

¹Quite equal.

²marjoram.

³goodliness.

My busy cure¹
 To you I owe;
 Humbly and low
 Commending me
 To your bountie.

As Machareus
 Fair Canace,²
 So I, ywis,
 Endeavour me
 Your name to see
 It be enrolled,
 Written with gold.

Phædra ye may
 Well represent;
 Intentive aye
 And diligent,
 No time mispent;
 Wherefore delight
 I have to write

Of Margarite,
 Pearl orient,
 Lode-star of light,
 Much reluent;
 Madam regent
 I may you call
 Of virtues all.

To MISTRESS JANE BLENNERHASSET

What though my pen wax faint,
 And hath small lust to paint?
 Yet shall there no restraint

¹care.

²Their tale told by Gower, *Conf. Am.*

Cause me to cease,
Among this prese,¹
For to increase
Your goodly name.

I will myself apply,
Trust me, intentively,
You for to stellafy;
And so observe
That ye ne swerve
For to deserve
Immortal fame.

Sith Mistress Jane Hasset
Small flowers helped to set
In my goodly chapelet,
Therefore I render of her the memory
Unto the legend of far Laodamy.

To MISTRESS ISABEL PENNELL

By Saint Mary, my lady,
Your mammy and your daddy
Brought forth a goodly baby!

My maiden Isabel,
Reflaring rosabel,²
The fragrant camomel;
The ruddy rosary,³
The sovereign rosemary,
The pretty strawberry;
The columbine, the nept,⁴
The gillyflower well set,
The proper violet:

¹company.

²Odorous fair-rose.

³rose-bush.

⁴catmint.

Ennewéd¹ your colour
 Is like the daisy flower
 After the April shower;
 Star of the Morrow gray,
 The blossom on the spray,
 The freshest flower of May;
 Maidly demure,
 Of womanhood the lure;
 Wherefore I make you sure
 It were an heavenly health,
 It were an endless wealth,
 A life for God himself,
 To hear this nightingale
 Among the birdēs smale
 Warbeling in the vale,
 Dug, dug,
 Jug, jug,
 Good year and good luck,
 With chuck, chuck, chuck, chuck!

To MISTRESS MARGARET HUSSEY

Merry Margaret,
 As midsummer flower,
 Gentle as falcon
 Or hawk of the tower:
 With solace and gladness,
 Much mirth and no madness,
 All good and no badness;
 So joyously,
 So maidly,
 So womanly
 Her demeaning
 In every thing,
 Far, far passing
 That I can indite,
 Or suffice to write

¹Renewed.

Of Merry Margaret
 As midsummer flower,
 Gentle as falcon
 Or hawk of the tower.
 As patient and still
 And as full of good will
 As fair Isaphill,¹
 Coliander,
 Sweet pomander,²
 Good Cassander,³
 Steadfast of thought,
 Well made, well wrought,
 Far may be sought
 Ere that he can find
 So courteous, so kind
 As Merry Margaret,
 This midsummer flower,
 Gentle as falcon
 Or hawk of the tower.

• *To MISTRESS GERTRUDE STATHAM*

Though ye were hard-hearted,
 And I with you thwarted
 With wordes that smarted,

Yet now doubtless ye give me cause
 To write of you this goodly clause,
 Mistress Gertrude,
 With womanhood endued,
 With virtue well renewed.

I will that ye shall be
 In all benignity
 Like to Dame Pasiphæ;
 For now doubtless ye give me cause
 To write of you this goodly clause,
 Mistress Gertrude,
 With womanhood endued,

¹Hypsipyle.

²ball of perfume.

³Cassandra.

With virtue well renewed.
 Partly by your counsel,
 Garnished with laurel
 Was my fresh coronal;
 Wherefore doubtless ye give me cause
 To write of you this goodly clause,
 Mistress Gertrude,
 With womanhood endued,
 With virtue well renewed.

To MISTRESS ISABEL KNIGHT

But if I should requite your kindness,
 Else say ye might
 That in me were great blindness
 I for to be so mindless,
 And could not write
 Of Isabel Knight.

It is not my custom nor my guise
 To leave behind
 Her that is both womanly and wise,
 And specially which glad was to devise
 The means to find
 To please my mind

In helping to work my laurel green
 With silk and gold:
 Galathea, the maid well beseen,¹
 Was never half so fair, as I ween,
 Which was extoll'd
 A thousand fold

By Maro, the Mantuan prudent,²
 Who list to read!
 But, an I had leisure competent,
 I could shew you such a precedent
 In very deed
 How ye exceed.

¹fair to see. ²i.e. Virgil. (See *Ecl. i. and iii.*)

OCCUPATION *to* SKELTON

Withdraw your hand, the time passes fast:
Set on your head this laurel which is wrought;
Hear you not *Æ*olus for you bloweth a blast?
I dare well say that ye and I be sought.
Make no delay, for now ye must be brought
Before my lady's grace, the Queen of Fame,
Where ye must briefly answer to your name.

SKELTON POETA

Casting my sight the chamber about,
To see how duly each thing in order was,
Toward the door, as we were coming out,
I saw Maister Newton sit with his compass,
His plummet, his pencil, his spectacles of glass,
Devising in picture, by his industrious wit,
Of my laurel the process every whit.

Forthwith upon this, as it were in a thought,
Gower, Chaucer, Lydgate, these three
Before remembered, me courteously brought
Into that place whereas they left me,
Where all the said poets sat in their degree.
But when they saw my laurel, richly wrought,
All other beside were counterfeit they thought

In comparison of that which I wear!
Some praised the pearl, some the stones bright:
Well was him that thereupon might stare!
• Of this work they had so great delight:
The silk, the gold, the floweris fresh to sight,
They said my laurel was the goodliest
That ever they saw, and wrought it was the best.

In her estate there sat the noble Queen
Of Fame. Perceiving how that I was come,

She wonderéd, methought, at my laurel green;
 She lookéd haughty, and gave on me a glum:
 There was among them no word then but mum!
 For each man harkened what she would to me say;
 Whereof in substance I brought this away.

The QUEEN OF FAME to SKELTON

My friend, sith ye are before us here present,
 To answer unto this noble audience,
 Of that shall be resound ye must be content;
 And, for as much as by the high pretence
 That ye have now thorough pre-eminence
 Of laureate triumph, your place is here reservéd,
 We will understand how ye have it deservéd.

SKELTON POETA to the QUEEN OF FAME

Right high and mighty princess of estate,
 In famous glory all other transcending,
 Of your bounty the accustomable rate
 Hath been full often and yet is entending
 To all that to reason is condescending,
 But if hasty credence, by maintenance of might,
 Fortune to stand between you and the light.

But such evidence I think for to induce,
 As so largely to lay for mine indemnity,
 That I trust to make mine excuse
 Of what charge soever ye lay against me;
 For of my bookis part ye shall see,
 Which in your records, I know well, be enrolled,
 And so Occupation, your registrar, me told.

Forth-with she commanded I should take my place;
 Calliope pointed me where I should sit.

With that, Occupation presséd in apace;
 Be merry, she said, be not afeard a whit,
 Your discharge here under mine arm is it!
 So then commanded she was upon this
 To shew her book, and she said, Here it is.

The QUEEN OF FAME to OCCUPATION

Your book of remembrance we will now that ye read;
 If any records in number can be found
 What Skelton hath compiléd and written indeed,
 Rehearsing by order, and what is the ground,
 Let see now for him how ye can expound;
 For in our court, ye wot well, his name cannot rise
 But if he write oftener than once or twice.

POETA SKELTON

With that of the book loosened were the clasps:
 The margent was illuminéd all with golden rails
 And byse,¹ empicturéd with gressops² and wasps,
 With butterflies and fresh³ peacock tails,
 Enfloréd with floweris and slimy snails;
 Envived picturis well touchéd and quickly;
 It would have made a man whole that had been right sickly

To behold how it was garnishéd and bound,
 Encovered over with gold of tissue fine;
 The clasps and bullions⁴ were worth a thousand pound;
 With balasses⁵ and carbuncles the borders did shine;
 With *aurum musicum*⁶ every other line
 Was written. And so she did her speed,
 Occupation, immediately to read.

¹azure.

²grass-hoppers.

³gay.

⁴stud.

⁵rubies, found by Marco Polo in Balasham.

⁶mosaic gold.

OCCUPATION readeth and expoundeth some part of SKELTON'S books and ballads with ditties of pleasure, inasmuch as it were too long a process to rehearse all by name that he hath compiled, etc.

Of your orator and poet laureate
Of England, his workis here they begin!

In primis the Book of Honourous Estate;
Item, the Book how men should flee sin;
Item, Royal Demeanance worship to win;
Item, the Book to speak well and be still;
Item, to learn you to die when ye will¹;

Of Virtue also the sovereign interlude;
The Book of the Rosiar²; Prince Arthur's Creation;
The False Faith that now goeth, which daily is renewed;
Item, his Dialogues of Imagination;
Item, Automedon of Love's Meditation;
Item, New Grammar in English compiléd;
Item, Bouge of Court, where Drede was beguiléd;

His comedy, Achademios calléd by name;
Of Tully's Familiars the translation³;
Item, Good Advertisement, that brainless doth blame;
The Recule against Gaguin of the French nation;
Item, the Popinjay,⁴ that hath in commendation
Ladies and gentlewomen such as deservéd,
And such as be counterfeits they be reservéd;

And of Sovereignty a noble pamphlet;
And of Magnificence a notable matter,

¹A version, probably, of the same piece translated from the Latin by Caxton: *A litle treatise, short and abridged, speyng of the arte and crafte to knowe well to dye . . .* (1490).

²i.e. *A Laud and Praise made for our Sovereign Lord the King.*
(See p. 29.)

³Praised in Caxton's preface to *The Boke of Eneydos*, 1490.

⁴*Speak, Parrot* (I suppose).

How Counterfeit Countenance of the new jet;
 With Crafty Conveyance doth smatter and flatter,
 And Cloaked Collusion is brought in to clatter
 With Courtly Abusion; who printeth it well in mind
 Much doubleness of the world therein may find;

Of Mannerly Maistress Margery Milk and Ale,
 To her he wrote many matters of mirth;
 Yet, though I say it, thereby lieth a tale,
 For Margery winched,² and brake her hinder-girth;
 Lor, how she made much of her gentle birth!
 With, Gingerly,³ go gingerly! her tail was made of hay;
 Go she never so gingerly, her honesty is gone away!

Hard to make ought of that is naked nought;
 This fustian⁴ mistress and this giggish gase,⁵
 Wonder is to write what wrenches⁶ she wrought,
 To face out her folly with a midsummer mase⁷!
 With pitch she patchéd her pitcher should not crase⁸;
 It may well rhyme, but shrewdly it doth accord,
 To pick out honesty of such a potshord!

Patet per versus.

*Hinc puer hic natus: vir conjugis hinc spoliatus
 Fure thori; est foetus Deli de sanguine cretus;
 Hinc magis extollo, quod erit puer alter Apollo;
 Si quaeris qualis? meretrix castissima talis;*

Et ralis, et ralis et reliqualis.

A good herring of these old tails;
 Find no more such from Wanfleet to Walēs!

Et reliquae omeliae de diversis tractatibus.

Of my lady's grace at the contemplation,⁹
 Out of French into English prose,

¹fashion.

²kicked.

³Carefully.

⁴vulgar.

⁵silly goose. ⁶ruses. ⁷a mad fancy.

⁸that it should not break.

⁹command.

Of Man's Life the Peregrination,
 He did translate, interpret, and disclose;
 The Treatise of Triumphis of the Red Rose,
 Wherein many stories are briefly contained
 That unremembered long time remained;

The Duke of York's creancer¹ when Skelton was,
 Now Henry the Eight, King of England,
 A treatise he deviséd and brought it to pass,
 Called *Speculum Principis*, to bear in his hand,
 Therein to read, and to understand
 All the demeanour of princely estate,
 To be our King, of God preordinate:

Also the Tunning of Elinor Rumming,
 With Colin Clout, John Ive,² with joforth³ Jack!
 To make such trifles it asketh some conning,
 In honest mirth parde requireth no lack;
 The white appeareth the better for the black,
 After conveyance⁴ as the world goes,
 It is no folly to use the Welshman's hose⁵;

The umbles⁶ of venison, the bottle of wine,
 To fair Mistress Anne⁷ that should have been sent,
 He wrotē thereof many a pretty line,
 Where it became, and whither it went,
 And how that it was wantonly spent;
 The Ballad also of the Mustard Tart,
 Such problems to paint it 'longeth to his art;

Of one Adam all a knave, late dead and gone, —
Dormiat in pace,⁸ like a dormouse! —
 He wrote an Epitaph for his grave-stone,
 With wordēs devout and sentence agerdouse,⁹
 For he was ever against Goddis house,

¹tutor. ²A heretic, temp. Edward IV. ³gee-up!

⁴dishonesty. ⁵i.e. equivocation. ⁶entrails.

⁷See ballad *Womanhood, wanton, ye want.*

⁸He sleeps in peace. ⁹severe. (See p. 477.)

All his delight was to brawl and to bark
 Against Holy Church, the priest, and the clerk.

Of Philip Sparrow, the lamentable fate,
 The doleful destiny, the careful chance,
 Devised by Skelton after the funeral rate;
 Yet some there be therewith that take grievance,
 And grudge thereat with frowning countenance;
 But what of that! hard is it to please all men;
 Who list amend it, let him set to his pen!

For the guise nowadays
 Of some jangling jays
 Is to discommend
 That they cannot amend,
 Though they would spend
 All the wits they have.

What ails them to deprave
 Philip Sparrow's grave?
 His *Dirige*,¹ her Commendation
 Can be no derogation,
 But mirth and consolation,
 Made by protestation,
 No man to discontent
 With Philip's interment.

Alas, the goodly maid,
 Why should she be afraid?
 Why should she take shame
 That her goodly name,
 Honourably reported,
 Should be set and sorted,
 To be matriculate
 With ladies of estate?

I conjure thee, Philip Sparrow,
 By Hercules that hell did harrow,
 And with a venomous arrow

¹i.e. dirge.

Slew the Epidaurs,
One of the Centaurs,
Or Onocentaurs,
Or Hippocentaurs;
By whose might and main
An hart was slain
With hornēs twain
Of glittering gold;
And of the apples of gold
Of Hesperides withhold,
And with a dragon kept
That nevermore slept,
By martial strength
He won at length;
And slew Geryon
With three bodies in one;
With mighty courage
Adaunted the rage
Of a lion savage;
Of Diomedes stable
He brought out a rabble
Of coursers and rounces¹
With leapēs and bounces;
And with mighty lugging,
Wrestling and tugging,
He pluckēd the bull
By the hornēd skull,
And offered to Cornucopia —
And so forth *per cetera!*

Also by Hecate's bower
In Pluto's ghastly tower;
By the ugly Eumenides,
That never have rest nor ease;
By the venomous serpent
That in hell is never brent,
In Lerna the Greekis fen

¹hacks.

That was engendered then;
By Chimera's flames,
And all the deadly names
Of infernal posté,¹
Where soulés fry and roastè;
By the Stygian flood,
And the streamés wood,²
Of Cocytus' bottomless well;
By the ferryman of hell,
Charon with his beard hoar,
That roweth with a rude oar,
And with his frownséd foretop
Guideth his boat with a prop;
I conjure Philip, and call,
In the name of King Saul,
Primo Regis express,
He bade the Pythoness
To witch-craft her to 'dress,
And by her abusions,
And damnable illusions,
And marvelous conclusions,
And by her superstitions,
Of wonderful conditions,
She raised up in that stead
Samuel that was dead;
But whether it were so,
He were *idem in numero*
The self-same Samuel,
Howbeit to Saul he did tell
The Philistines should him ascry,³
And the next day he should die,
I will myself discharge
To lettered men at large!
But, Philip, I conjure thee
Now by these namés three,
Diana in the woodés green,

¹power.²wild.³assail.

Luna that so bright doth sheen,
 Prosperina in hell,
 That thou shortly tell,
 And shew now unto me
 What the cause may be
 Of this perplexie!

*Inferias, Philippe, tuas Scroupe pulchra Joanna
 Instanter petit: cur nostri carminis illam
 Nunc pudet? est sero; minor est infamia vero.*¹

Then such that have disdainéd,
 And of this work complainéd,
 I pray God they be painéd
 No worse than is containéd
 In verses two and three
 That follow as ye may see:

*Luride, cur, livor, volucris pia funera damnas?
 Talia te rapiant rapiunt quae fata volucrem!
 Est tamen invidia mors tibi continua.*²

The grunting and the groigning of the gronning swine;³
 Also the mourning of the maple-root;
 How the green coverlet suffered great pine,⁴
 When the fly-net was set for to catch a coot,
 Struck one with a bird-bolt⁵ to the heart-root;
 Also a devout Prayer to Moses' horns,
 Metrified merrily, mingled with scorns;

Of pageantés⁶ that were played in Joyous Guard;
 He wrote of a mews⁷ through a mud wall;

¹Philip, your obsequies the fair Joanna ardently longed for: why is she now ashamed of our song? It is too late; shame is less than truth.

²Why, green Envy, do you condemn the sacred funeral rites of the bird? May the fate which overtook the bird seize upon thee! Yet is malice a perpetual death to thee.

³Against venomous tongues (perhaps).

⁴pain.

⁵a blunt arrow used to kill birds.

⁶pranks.

⁷opening.

How a doe came tripping in at the rear ward,
 But, lord, how the parker¹ was wroth withall! •
 And of Castle Angel² the fenestrall,
 Glittering and glistering and gloriously glazéd,
 It made some men's eyen dazzled and dazéd;

The Repeat³ of the Recule of Rosamondis bower,
 Of his pleasant pain there and his glad distress
 In planting and plucking a proper jeloffer⁴ flower;
 But how it was, some were too reckless,
 Notwithstanding it is remediless;
 What might she say? what might he do thereto?
 Though Jack said nay, yet Mock there lost her shoe⁵;

How then like a man he won the barbican
 With an assault of solace at the long last;
 The colour deadly, swart, blo, and wan
 Of Ixione, his limbs⁶ dead and past,
 The cheek and the neck but a shorté cast⁷;
 In Fortune's favour ever to endure,
 No man living, he saith, can be sure;

How dame Minerva first found the olive tree,
 And planted it where never before was none;
 An hind enhurt, hit by casualty,
 Recovered when the forester was gone;
 The harts of the herd began for to groan,

¹park-keeper.

²"And the Pope fled into Castle Angell" (Cavendish, *Life of Wolsey*).

³Recital.

⁴carnation.

⁵I think it means, "lost her good reputation." A knight who conquered in combat was said to win his shoes.

⁶Dyce has "her lambes." Mr. Hughes (op. cit.) suggests the above reading, which helps to restore meaning to the passage.

⁷This may refer to Ixion's cramped position on the wheel, i.e. a short space between his cheek and neck (?).

The hounds began to yearn¹ and to quest;
With little business standeth much rest;

His Epitomes of the miller and his joly make²;
How her blee³ was bright as blossom on the spray,
A wanton wench and well could bake a cake;
The miller was loth to be out of the way!
But yet for all that, be as be may,
Whether he rode to Swaffham or to Some,⁴
The miller durst not leave his wife at home!

With, Woefully Arrayed, and shamefully betrayed;
Of his making devout meditations;
Vexilla regis he deviséd to be displayed;
With *Sacris solenniis*, and other contemplations,
That in them compriséd considerations;
Thus passeth he the time both night and day,
Sometime with sadness, sometime with play;

Though Gallen and Dioscorides,
With Hippocrates and Maister Auycen,⁵
By their physic doth many a man ease,
And though Albumasar can thee inform and ken
What constellations are good or bad for men,
Yet when the rain raineth and the goose winketh,
Little woteth the gosling what the goose thinketh!

He is not wise against the stream that striveth;
Dun is in the mire — dame, reach me my spur!
Needs must he run that the devil driveth;
When the steed is stollen, spar' the stable-door!
A gentle hound should never play the cur;

¹give tongue. ²mate. ³complexion. ⁴Soham.

⁵An Arabian physician of the tenth century.

*A Christmas game, in which Dun (a cart-horse) is supposed to be stuck in the mud.

⁷shut.

It is soon espiéd where the thorn pricketh,
And well woteth that cat whose beard she licketh;

With Marione clarion, sol, lucern,¹
• *Grand juir*, of this French proverb old,
How men were wont for to discern
By Candlemas Day what weather should hold,
But Marione clarion was caught with a cold,
And all overcast with cloudés unkind,
This goodly flower with stormés was untwind²;

This jillyflower gentle, this rose, this lily flower,
This primrose peerless, this proper violet,
This columbine clear and freshest of colour,
This delicate daisy, this strawberry prettily set,
With froward frostés, alas, was all to-fret³!
But who may have a more ungracious life
Than a childis bird and a knavis wife?

Think what ye will
Of this wanton bill;
By Mary Gipsy,
Quod scripsi, scripsi:
Uxor tua, sicut vitis,
Habetis in custodiam,
Custodite sicut scitis,
*Secundum Lucam, etc.*⁴

Of the Bonehams of Ashridge beside Berkhamstead,⁵
That goodly place to Skelton most kind,

¹lamp. • ²destroyed. ³altogether consumed.

⁴What I have written, I have written [Vulgatæ, Joan. xix. 22]. Your wife, like a vine, you have in confinement, guard her as with statutes, according to Luke, etc. (Vulgatæ, Luc. i. 13, "Fear not . . . thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son").

⁵The college of the Bonhommes. It was founded expressly in honour of the blood of Jesus, which its founder, Edward, Earl of Cornwall (*temp. Henry III*), is said to have brought to England. (See Todd's *History of the College of Bonhommes*, 1823.)

Where the sang royal is, Christēs blood so red,
 Whereupon he metrified after his mind;
 A pleasanter place than Ashridge is, hard were to find,
 As Skelton rehearseth, with wordēs few and plain,
 In his distichon made on verses twain;

*Fraxinus in clivo frondetque viret sine rivo,
 Non est sub divo similis sine flumine vivo¹;*

The Nation of Fools² he left not behind;
 Item, Apollo that whirled up his chair,
 That made some to snur and snuf in the wind;
 It made them to skip, to stamp, and to stare,
 Which, if they be happy, have cause to beware
 In rhyming and railing with him for to mell,
 For dread that he learn them their A.B.C. to spell!

POETA SKELTON

With that I stood up, half suddenly afraid;
 Suppleeing to Fame, I besought her grace,
 An that it would please her, full tenderly I prayed,
 Out of her bookes Apollo to rase.
 Nay, sir, she said, what so in this place
 Of our noble court is once spoken out
 It must needs after run all the world about.

God wot, these words made me full sad;
 And when that I saw it would no better be,

¹The ash-tree on the hill [or ridge] blooms and flourishes without a brook,

There is not another like it under the sky without a living stream.

²Not the *Ship of Fools*, a few chapters of which were included by mistake among Skelton's works. Perhaps this refers to the lines in *Against a Comely Coistrown*, which begins:

"Of all nations under the heaven,
 These frantic fools," etc.

But this is doubtful.

But that my petition would not be had,
 What should I do but take it in gre¹?
 For, by Jupiter and his high majestie,
 I did what I could to scrape out the scrolls,
 ApoHo to rase out of her ragman rolls!

Now hereof it irketh me longer to write;
 To Occupauon I will again resort,
 Which read on still, as it came to her sight,
 Rendering my devices I made in disport
 Of the Maiden of Kent calléd Comfort,
 Of lovers' testaments and of their wanton willis,
 And how Iollas lovéd goodly Phillis;

Diodorus Siculus of my translation²
 Out of fresh Latin into our English plain,³
 Recounting commodities of many a strange nation;
 Who readeth it once would read it again;
 Six volumes engroséd together it doth contain.
 But when of the laurel she made rehearsall,
 All oratōrs, poets, with other great and small,

A thousand thousand, I trow, to my dome,⁴
 Triumpha, triumpha! they criéd all about!
 Of trumpets and clarions the noise went to Rome;
 The starry heaven, methought, shook with the shout;
 The ground groanéd and trembléd, the noise was so stout!
 The Queen of Fame commanded shut fast the boke,
 And therewith suddenly out of my dream I woke.

My mind of the great din was somedele amazéd,
 I wiped mine eyen for to make them clear;

¹take it kindly.

²Still in MS. at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. An edition was, at one time, being prepared by the E.E.T.S.

³i.e. from the Latin of Poggio.

⁴thinking.

Then to the heaven spherical upward I gazéd,
 Where I saw Janus, with his double chere,¹
 Making his almanac for the new year;
 He turned his tirikis, his volvel ran fast:
 Good luck this new year! the old year is past.

*Mens tibi sit consulta, petis? sic consule menti;
 Aemula sit Jani, retro speculetur et ante.²*

Skeltonis alloquitur librum suum.³

*Ite, Britannorum lux O radiosa, Britannum
 Carmina nostra pium vestrum celebrate Catullum!
 Dicite, Skeltonis vester Adonis erat;
 Dicite, Skeltonis vester Homerus erat,
 Barbara cum Latio pariter jam currite versu;
 Et licet est verbo pars maxima texta Britanno,
 Non magis incompta nostra Thalia patet,
 Est magis inulta nec mea Calliope.
 Nec vos paeniteat rabiem tolerare caninam,
 Nam Maro dissimiles non tulit ille minas,
 Immunis nec enim Musa Nasonis erat.⁴*

LENVOY

Go, little quair,⁵
 Demean you fair!

¹face.

²Your mind must be consulted, you say? Well, consult your mind;

Let it emulate Janus, looking back and front.

³Skelton addresses his own book.

⁴Go, radiant light of the Britons, make known our songs, your worthy British Catullus. Say Skelton was your Adonis; say Skelton was your Homer; though foreign, you now run on a par with Latin verse. The greater part is woven of British words; nor is our Thalia too uncouth, nor my Calliope too unlearned. Nor are you sorry to bear with dog's madness; for even great Virgil bore the brunt of similar threats, and even Ovid's muse was not exempt.

⁵book.

Take no despair,
Though I you wrate
After this rate
In English letter;
So much the better
Welcome shall ye
To some men be;
For Latin works
Be good for clerks;
Yet now and then
Some Latin men
May haply look
Upon your book,
And so proceed
In you to read,
That so indeed
Your fame may spread
In length and bread.
But then I dread
Ye shall have need
You for to speed
To harness¹ bright,
By force of might,
Against envy
And obloquy;
And wote ye why?
Not for to fight
Against despite,
Nor to derain²
Battle again³
Scornful disdain,
Nor for to chide,
Nor for to hide
You cowardly;
But courteously
That I have penn'd

¹armour.

²contest.

³against.

For to defend,
 Under the banner
 Of all good manner,
 Under protection
 Of sad correction,
 With toleration
 And supportation
 Of reformation,
 If they can spy
 Circumspectly
 Any word defacéd
 That might be raséd,
 Else ye shall pray
 Them that ye may
 Continue still
 With their good will.

*Ad serenissimam Majestatem Regiam, pariter cum Domino
 Cardinali, Legato a latere honorificatissimo, etc.¹*

LAUTRE ENVOY

*Perge, liber, celebrem pronus regem venerare
 Henricum octavum, resonans sua praemia laudis.
 Cardineum dominum pariter venerando salutes,
 Lagatum a latere, et fiat memor ipse precare
 Prebendae, quam promisit mihi credere quondam,
 Meque suum referas pignus sperare salutis –
 Inter spemque metum.²*

¹To the Most Serene Royal Majesty, equally with the Lord Cardinal, the most honourable legate *a latere*.

²Go, book, fall before the great King Henry VIII and worship him, re-echoing with his glories. Greet too, with equal reverence, the great Cardinal, legate *a latere*, and may he be mindful to sue for the prebend which he promised to entrust to me some day, and give me ground to hope for his protection — between hope and fear.

'Tween hope and dread
My life I lead,
But of my speed
 Small sickness¹;
Howbeit I rede²
Both word and deed
Should be agreed
 In nobleness.
Or else, etc.

¹security.

²consider.